

Friday 1 May 2020

**“A bicycle is useless without air in the tyres.....but air supports much more than a bicycle on life’s journey.” Matthew Brown, April 2020**

Dear Blackfen students

Earlier this week I wrote to you about the importance of water and hydration on any journey you take. I said that it was particularly important for long distance running such as the running of a marathon. However, water is important to keep us going every day. Last week I mentioned my tomato seeds and water – get ready for a progress update on these next week. Back to running and the journey we are on. Air – you cannot see it, you can’t really feel it and you can only smell it when it is heavily polluted. Wow! Is it important! When you have taken exercise – and I hope you are managing to get out of your home at least once a day – you will know that feeling of being out of breath and taking in gulps of air to get your breathing back to normal. The top athletes often train at high altitude where the air is thinner. I am not going to tell you about the science behind this but it is all linked to air being thinner, red blood cells and oxygen levels. The air we breathe is fundamental to supporting life and our journey. You will have seen, in recent weeks the importance of oxygen and the use of ventilators for people in hospital suffering from Covid-19. Once again, highlighting the significance of air to support life.

But where else have you noticed the importance of air over the last 6 weeks? Probably, some of you would have gone to your shed, garage, garden or some place in your home, to dust down your bicycle that may have seen no real use for some (maybe more) years. First problem.....getting rid of the cobwebs and the associated spiders, second problem ....getting the wheels to turn, third problem, I have grown since I last rode it and the saddle is too low ....and the final problem...the tyre or both tyres are flat. Now, you know as well as me that we can get the wheels turning easily, we can move the saddle up and we can wipe down the cobwebs.....but the bike is still useless without air in the tyres.

Sometimes we have to stop and take in the air – and it is remarkably fresh at the moment – and make sure – before we move on, that we have taken in enough water and air to help us on our journey and to make the journey more bearable.

Keep up the good work, keep supporting each other and keep going.

With my best wishes to you, your friends and your family at the end of this week.

Matthew Brown