



VIEW FROM THE CHALK FACE MICHAELMAS 2020

WEEK 4 (W/C 28TH SEPTEMBER)

You will have shared my joy at seeing both sites brimming with smiling faces over the past few weeks. What a delight, and indeed relief, to be able to be up and running again. Although the restrictions mean it is a different sort of schooling at times, the warmth and aspirational drive of the Langley education is undiminished. There has been transitions for pupils into new year groups and staff into different roles this term; all these changes have been taken on with real energy and sense of purpose; my thanks to all for their creativity, adaptability and resilience.

I am incredibly appreciative to all parents, grandparents and carers for the wonderful support of the children and all at Langley. We are all facing difficulties and challenges, and I am proud that we have a community of impressive and innovative supporters.

This publication is not a letter, but more musings and reflections on current issues, educational or otherwise; such curiosity is an important part of the education we espouse. There has been a plethora of tragedies in the past few months, some Covid related, some not. The recent death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been a moment to pause and take stock; not only to celebrate a formidable life, but also to shine a light on what can be achieved when words, action, courage and persistence are intertwined. The liberal icon on the US Supreme Court was at the centre of the expansion of women's and LGBT rights, as well as the voting rights for African Americans. Justice Ginsburg joined the American Civil Liberties Union as the founding director of the new Women's Rights Project in 1972 and was nominated to the Supreme court in 1993, only the second woman to serve on this court. She constantly and consistently fought for gender equality: in areas of pay (Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, 2009), and admission (US v Virginia, 1996, to turn over a male only admission policy to the Virginia Military Institute) across US society. Described as 'a giant of justice, a champion for equality and progress,' she was unrelenting in ensuring that those who felt marginalised by society had a voice and justice. Seen as the most important voice for LGBT+ advancement, Justice Ginsburg is seen by many as an 'irreplaceable giant on the Supreme Court.'

We all have views on a wide spectrum of societal issues, and the US judiciary may or may not interest you. However, I am sure we will all watch the forthcoming US election with differing degrees of interest and fascination. The example set by Justice Ginsburg is one that we can emulate and be inspired by. In our meetings this term, Senior School Prefects have been discussing what legacy they want to be remembered for and what initiatives are important to them as a group. Diversity – understanding, celebration, progress - in all its guises, is something that means a lot to them and it is an agenda that they want to pursue; along with increased engagement with the wider community and charity sector. Their words and intentions are noble and it is now up to them, as holders of the office this year, to turn those into meaningful actions across all strands of the school. Watch this space. They may succeed, they may fail, but importantly they



have the opportunity and canvas on which to give it a go; whatever the outcome, they will learn about themselves through the process.

In my talk to staff at the start of term I spoke about individual and collective actions; leadership takes many forms, but it is often distilled down to a series of small initiatives. Ernest Shackleton, though in many ways a flawed man, coped well in adversity. In his many explorations, he faced awful situations, with dangers on all sides. But he was full of optimism and positivity as he had the right people around him, the right people striving in the same direction. I get that same sense as I speak to all those who are working and supporting the Langley community – we can ‘get through’ and flourish because we have the right people.

To conclude I return to the USA. The first three words of the US constitution are, ‘we the people.’ There are external factors that we cannot control, but we, the people, can show kindness and make deliberate choices to make the right, though not always easy, decision. Thank you for entrusting your child to us; it is a privilege to walk beside them.

Best wishes,

Jon Perriss
Headmaster