

It's hard to believe that we are now in June.

I was looking last week at special celebration or awareness days and weeks which are observed in June, and there are quite a few. This week is Bike to work week, Child safety week, Heart Rhythm Week, and coaching week. This week also there is World Environment Day on Wednesday, which I encourage you to be a part of and National Fish and Chip Day on Friday, which we will definitely be able to celebrate.

The oddest day I read about was in America they celebrate Flip a Coin day on 1st June, which is supposed to be a day when all of your decisions are decided on the flip of a coin. This, I found out, is a tradition which dates back to Julius Caesar. When Caesar was faced with a really difficult decision, which had seemingly equal merits and was very difficult to call,

Caesar would take a coin and flip it to make decisions. The correct answer was "heads", which of course carried his image on the coin.

Have you ever had a really tough decision to make? Probably the first really tough one for most will be Y9 GCSE choices where you have to make choices pretty rapidly which will have a significant effect on the rest of your life. However, in the Prep School, you probably face decisions on a daily basis, about whether to do or not do certain things, to do the right thing, or the most popular thing, how to include someone who is being left out of a game.

I would say that flipping a coin is a particularly Roman way of decision making, fatalistic, with a morality that is difficult to understand today. Decisions, in my view, are best guided by doing what is right, living up to our value of integrity, especially thinking of more than just yourself, and the few others who are around you. If you are able think about the community as a whole, even better.

Nowadays it is quite common to refer to a school as a "community". A sense of community was strongly in evidence in yesterday's 10km run through Bedford. A very special member of school staff, who I worked very closely with, died this year, and 130 people ran to raise money for charities which looked after him before he died.

When we refer to a school as a community, we are really saying that we all belong and each of us has a part to play in it.

An analogy could be a body which is made up of various parts, each with its own important job, and each very important in its own way. Which do you think is the most important? Any you would want to do without?

However, if someone stamps on your toe, it is not just the toe that feels the pain - we feel the pain, the whole body is aware that something nasty has happened and it is impossible to ignore the part which hurts.

In the same way, as members of a school community, each us needs each other. When something happens to one of us, in sometimes a small, sometimes a big way, we are all affected. Every one of us has a vital part to play in shaping the quality of life in the classroom, the boarding house, the tutor group and the school in general. I know this because teachers,

parents and boys let me know what happens in school and it works well when people pull together.

If you think about this at a smaller level, we are all part of a number of teams - tutor group, sports teams, choirs, orchestras.

Consider this

Have you ever seen geese flying along in formation in a distinct V shape? You may have heard this before, but it is always worth repeating. We can learn a great deal from the way that geese fly along in a V formation.

In fact, we can learn 5 things from geese flying in a V formation.

**1. When geese fly together, each goose provides additional lift and reduces air resistance for the goose flying behind it.** Consequently, by flying together in a v-formation, scientists estimate that the whole flock can fly about 70% further with the same amount of energy than if each goose flew alone. Geese have discovered that they can reach their destination more quickly and with less energy expended when they fly together in formation.

Of course it is the same with us:

When we work together, with others, sharing ideas and helping each other, we can do things better, faster, more efficiently. This sort of teamwork lifts everyone - think about those boys in your class, team or choir, who lift others by their inspiration, by their positive words or positive behaviour (one such boy is our previous head of school, Fraser Dingwall, who will captain his country this year - perhaps you haven't even looked, but we know them, and we want you all to learn how to do this.

**2. When a goose drops out of the v-formation it quickly discovers that it requires a great deal more effort and energy to fly.** Consequently, that goose will quickly return to the formation to take advantage of the lifting power that comes from flying together.

We know this most clearly when someone is on your team in a sport and thinks that they are the most important person on the team and they can do without their teammates

The most intelligent know that there is power from being part of a team - synergy and energy that comes when they are an active part of a cohesive team moving toward their destination, and want to return to the group.

**3. Geese rotate leadership.** The goose flying in the front of the formation has to expend the most energy because it is the first to break up the flow of air that provides the additional lift for all of the geese who follow behind the leader. Consequently, when the lead goose gets tired, it drops out of the front position and moves to the rear of the formation, where the resistance is lightest, and another goose moves to the leadership position. This rotation of position happens many times in the course of the long journey to warmer climates.

In good teams, all have a chance to take a lead at certain times. Everyone needs the chance to shine, and as good teams, we need to ensure that we all have that ability. You see this in the very best performing teams. This is why Liverpool beat Barca in the Champions League

semi, and why when Saracens players were asked about their try in the final, they always say that they were glad they scored for the impact on the team.

4. **Geese honk at each other.** They frequently make loud honking sounds as they fly together. Scientists speculate that this honking is their way of communicating with each other during their long flight.

Similarly, when working on teams, it is exceedingly important for each team member to communicate regularly with all the other team members. Teams frequently fall apart because of the lack of adequate communication among the various members of the team.

So, in our teams, tutor groups and classes, it is vital that we communicate, which means listening as well as talking.

5. **Geese help each other.** Scientists also discovered that when one goose becomes ill, is shot or injured, and drops out of the formation, two other geese will fall out of formation and remain with the weakened goose. They will stay with and protect the injured goose from predators until it is able to fly again or dies. This is like trees, which also look after each other. If a young sapling is struggling for nutrients, astonishingly, older trees divert nutrients to their younger saplings.

Likewise, human teams work best when they do more than just work together, but genuinely care for the well-being of one other.

This last point is vital for us. We would all do well to remember this as we enjoy the last five, busy, fun-packed weeks of the school year. This is what we will be encouraging you, strongly encouraging you to do, and will point out if you are not doing it.