

## **Hermit crab assembly**

So, we are approaching the end of our first week back at school. For some in the room, it will have been a welcome return to a familiar routine. For many others, it will have been the first week of your career at Merchant Taylors' School. For both groups, I'm sure that it has been tiring. I hope that it has also been challenging, interesting, exciting and that you are enthusiastic to keep going. Do get a good rest this weekend though.

I would like to show you a short video to help us to reflect on the week we have enjoyed and look forward to finding yet more success in the future. My video is taken from a programme made by the wonderful TV presenter David Attenborough. I'm sure you will have seen many of his programs about nature and animals. Indeed, the program he made about plastic in the ocean has had a huge impact and has inspired many to try to keep our beautiful natural world safe. The program I wish to show you is about hermit crabs. These remarkable creatures are unlike other crabs, in that the lower half of their body is not protected by a crab's usual tough shell. That means that they must protect themselves in clever ways, and in the process they display some unusual behaviour. Let's have a look.

(Video of hermit crabs forming a line and all exchanging their shells, so that each gets a larger size shell. One crab is cheated of its shell by another and has to go looking for a new shell.)

Extraordinary, aren't they? And they offer an interesting analogy for the situation in which you find yourselves. Just like those hermit crabs, at the beginning of this term you are ready

for a bigger shell. For some of you it is simply a progression to the year group above you. Others have exchanged a smaller school for this much bigger school. In both cases, you needed to make the change in order to allow you to grow yet further. Nobody can grow to meet their full potential without moving on to a new shell – or in your case, new spaces and new challenges.

The second message of the hermit crabs is the exact opposite of their names. The word hermit applies to solitary people, who live alone and avoid the company of others. These crabs are called hermit crabs but they are far from solitary. In fact, they need to work as a team in order for each of them to thrive. Unless you have a brother in the room, each of us in this room goes home to a different house and a different family. Each of us lives a life that is, to a greater or lesser extent, different to the others. But that does not mean we are alone. We are always stronger as a team. There's a reason that we wear the same uniform. There's a reason we enjoy sport. There's a reason why we could not wait to get you back into school and did not wish to continue with online or remote learning. Just like the hermit crabs, we thrive best when we work together, each helping the other.

Those hermit crabs could only work together effectively if they understood each other well. They literally sized each other up in order to work out how to form their chain to exchange shells. Like them, our team will be so much stronger if we take the trouble to understand each other and learn about each other. I hope that you have spent the week making new friends, whether you are an old hand in the school, or a new arrival. Making friends is all about finding out about another person, and sharing what you have in common. There is no better thing in the world than making a new friend.

Those hermit crabs needed a shell to survive. Without it, they were vulnerable to the heat of the day and to predators. You don't have to worry about dangers like that. I promise you that no one in the school will be eaten by a lion today. But we do require protection in other ways. You will require the equivalent of a shell to protect you and allow you to thrive. I wonder what will make up your shell? May I suggest that you rely upon a number of reliable standbys? For your protection, lean upon the kindness of others, trust in the support of your teachers, stretch your wings with high expectations and never forget your own good nature and outstanding talents. Those will support, protect and assist you.

Finally, let us not forget how that video ended. Our poor hermit crab was surprised by another, thieving, hermit crab who took away the good shell he had his eye on and left him with a similar sized shell that had a hole in it. Disappointing to say the least. But it reminds us that sometimes things will not always go our way. The hermit crab has a final lesson for us. We will need sometimes need a little resilience, a little strength of character. I hope that you have not had too many such experiences this week, or indeed in the years ahead. But they will sometimes come along. And that's when we need to pick ourselves up and, just like that hermit crab, get on with things. Another shell will come along. Another day will dawn. Things will improve.

You've heard me speak to you on three occasions in just five days. That's probably enough from me for the time being. I hope you had a lovely week and I wish you a restful weekend. See you on Monday.