

Friday 7th May 2021

Dear Parents,

Connecting with Nature is the theme for next week's Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW). We have an opportunity to begin this from today, by slowing down, coming away from the screens and getting outside. I enjoyed the recent four-day social media boycott launched by footballers and athletes around the world as they attempted to tackle abuse and discrimination on their platforms; how refreshing it would be if we didn't need a boycott for this to happen.

Taking a break away from the screens would be a major challenge for many of us as they are such a part of our lives. I wonder whether we could, *in the future*, as a community, consider having a full weekend off email, social media, Xbox, PS4, etc and *only use phones as phones* for a 48-hour period. It would take some serious buy-in and I'm not sure how popular it would be, yet it might be something to start a discussion around kitchen tables this weekend. Just imagine what we and our children might do, achieve and enjoy instead...

The power of the community is something that sits well with me. As a History teacher first and foremost, I have always enjoyed teaching the movement of people and events such as, the Pilgrimage of Grace, have always been a joy to share with pupils. I was nicely disturbed by a delegation of Year 6 pupils on Thursday morning asking for me to consider their play space here at the school. They presented their aims in a peaceful and engaging fashion and I hope we can take some action as a result. Watch that space.

The Ardingly Clean Sweep has always been a positive and purposeful way to connect with nature and do one's bit in the community, since Nathaniel Calkins launched the project some three years ago. Please consider you and your children's role in this activity as an ongoing project. Photos to charlie.tomlinson@ardingly.com will be well-received and the lanes and paths of Sussex will only benefit. Please make sure you keep yourselves safe above all.

Enjoy the weekend and I look forward to hearing and seeing all sorts of stories of those who have *connected with nature* over the weekend as MHAW begins.

Yours ever



Harry Hastings
Head of Ardingly Prep School