

Rupert Reports...

Term 4 is always an important one as it is when GCSE and A Level classes come to the end of the syllabuses they are studying and the final countdown to exams starts. This term has also seen various 'special weeks' including those focusing on charity, literature and finally, this week, respect.

I usually update you on my travels and, over the last couple of months, I have had a week in Cornwall. Injuries have healed enough to have us back walking sections of the South West coastal path although we are covering shorter lengths than before. I have also had a couple of weekends in South Devon. We investigated Dawlish Warren on one trip, and it looks like a good location for a geography investigation if any of the current Year 12 are interested...?

The media has carried a few stories linked to the benefits of having dogs in school as stress-busters with Sir Anthony Seldon, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham, advocating them. The Dogs Trust responded to say that schools were not the right places for dogs. As always, the answer lies somewhere in the middle. Some dogs are good things for some schools and some children. Hardenhuish has a huge number of positive attributes and, from the point of view of a school dog, its size and range of buildings are particularly helpful.

It is rare for me to be in a large mainstream KS3 or 4 class. If this does happen, it is in one of the geography rooms where there is an office in the back I can go into when I feel like it and be on my own. The three offices I tend to stay in are all in quieter locations out of the way of the main school, again meaning that I can keep out of the throng. The large open nature of the site means there is plenty of places for me to have a ramble about with Hardenhuish Wood being a real favourite of mine when I often meet the neighbours and some parents out walking their dogs.

Not all children are confident around dogs and so my presence in the school can help build confidence if handled sensitively. Also, some children are allergic to animals – I am not currently spending any time this year with one of the Year 12 geography groups for this reason but am instead sitting in with the psychologists. Not all schools are lucky enough

to have the kind of facilities we do, and I can see how a large noisy school that was in only one or very few buildings would be difficult for a dog. I have now spent almost seven years working with the staff and pupils at Hardenhuish and I hope they feel I have been of some use. As with all things in education, there is no one size fits all it is about doing the best for the students you have with the resources available.

Happy holidays everyone!

