

Using Spring as a springboard to noticing

In a recent assembly, I shared the Victorian poem 'Spring' by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins was a poet and Jesuit priest, and realised that he could reveal the Glory of God to other through poetry.

Although the poem is a sonnet with sprung rhythm and usually introduced at GCSE level, the children understood the main points and were greatly helped by the images that accompanied the words.

The opening line is,

'Nothing is so beautiful as Spring'.

It is hard to disagree at this time of year. In April, the world wakes up, greenery is all around us, and the wild birds begin to sing. Even in an urban environment such as ours, the changes are easy to see.

Spring is an ideal time to talk to children about wild nature, and to go out to greener spaces and make the most of the fresh air. We are blessed in Croydon with many excellent parks, all just a walk or short tram ride away.

We find more and more that children are dependent on digital media for their entertainment and comfort. Outdoor activities are a great way of breaking this cycle and making everyone appreciate the world around them a little more.

There are many sources to help us as parents and carers when outside – The Woodland Trust and RSPB are two. A little knowledge from organisations such as this can make a country walk stimulating for children.

The difficulty is getting started, and making time in busy weekends for something different. A little extra effort in this goes a long way.

Here are some questions that you might want to bear in mind when you are out with your children:

Do you know the names of native trees?

Can children talk about weather and the changing of the seasons?

Do the children know how to tell the difference between common wild birds? How do they get the information to identify lesser known species?

Do children mind being outside in wet weather, with the right clothing on?

Good luck and happy walking this weekend.