

Ms Rayner does Red January for charity



New Year's Day – starting the Red January challenge



After completing a night swim in the lake at St Aidan's RSPB reserve. Water temperature a chilly 4 degrees

Red January is a nationwide movement by Sport in Mind - a UK charity whose mission is 'to improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems through sport and other physical activities'. Red January challenges participants to improve their own mental wellbeing through increased physical activity while also raising much needed funds for the charity.

My personal challenge is to do at least 15 000 steps a day every day in January as well as to complete a wild swim each weekend. This part of the challenge involves swimming outdoors (eg in a lake, river or the sea) in January temperatures! Cold water swimming has been shown to be good for both physical and mental health if done properly (and one can stand the cold!) so it seemed like a good activity to try to do for Red January. I did a lake swim on New Year's Day to kick off my Red January effort and actually did a night swim last weekend. This was quite challenging as not only was there the cold and threat of things touching my legs under the water (!) but there was also the dark to contend with. There was a lot of 'mind over matter'

that was needed, but I did it and was really pleased to have completed the challenge, both for myself and for the money it helped to raise.

Talking about the challenge with pupils in school is also a good way of raising awareness of the importance of mental wellbeing. Poor mental health is experienced at some point by so many people, and yet it is still a difficult thing for many people to talk about. I think it is so important that children know that it is 'ok to not be ok', that it is good to talk about how they are feeling, that they have the language to be able to do this and that they feel able to ask for help or support if they need it.

Red January is definitely boosting my own mental wellbeing in so many ways and I am so grateful to all those who have supported me so far by making donations (and also for the lovely messages of encouragement I have received – this has meant a lot to me). I am so proud that my small effort is raising money to support others.

I will be updating my Red January page with photos and comments daily so if you would like to follow my progress and see the photos click the link below :

- <https://join.redjanuary.com/fundraisers/jorayner>



Sunset swim, New Year's Day

Ms Jo Rayner

High School & Sixth Form

