THE WAY

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FROM THE HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL

The Power of Reading

One of the many rewarding duties I undertake is interviewing potential students. Our College questionnaire asks: “Do you enjoy reading? What are you reading at the moment? How much reading do you do each day?”

Alarmingly, many students report reading only comic books or manga, and usually for only 20 minutes a day. Unsurprisingly, their NESA results often reflect this, showing lower proficiency in reading, grammar and spelling.

I recently shared an article by futurist Michael McQueen with our Faculty Coordinators. He outlines a global trend of moving away from the digital world and back toward "analogue" learning in the classroom. He writes:

“In fact, large international studies from the OECD found that countries investing heavily in classroom technology often saw declines in literacy, numeracy, and science outcomes rather than improvements.... A January 2026 survey of 1,000 primary school staff in England found that 28 per cent of five-year-olds could not use books correctly, with some even attempting to ‘swipe’ physical pages like a phone screen.”

My sense is that both children and adults are reading fewer books while spending more time on social media. The impact is significant, and it isn't confined to literacy alone.

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One of the greatest benefits of reading is the increase in empathy. In 2013, researchers Kidd and Castano published a study suggesting that getting lost in complex, character-driven stories acts as a “gym” for social skills. It helps readers become more empathetic and better equipped to navigate complicated real-life relationships.

Other research-backed benefits include:

- **- Increased Longevity:** An average increase in lifespan of 2 years.
- **- Stress Reduction:** Lowering stress levels by up to 68%.
- **- Academic Gains:** Significant improvements in vocabulary, Maths, and English.
- **- Focus:** Training the brain to maintain deep concentration during long exams.

Students who see their parents reading are also more likely to read! Happy reading over the Easter break.

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Head of Senior School

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