



HEADMASTER'S LETTER

18 September 2023



Vision:	To offer our students an exceptional all-round education		
Values:	Respect	Integrity	Aspiration

Dear Parent

A very warm welcome back to RGS for the new academic year. An especial welcome to those joining us as new students or staff. As you will be aware, a combination of promotions, re-locations, retirements or simply the seizing of opportunities at the end of last year means that we have a number of excellent, new colleagues joining our staff.

Birthday Boys

I have met my first group of 'Birthday Boys', where I was able to celebrate their twelfth birthdays and establish how well our newest students have settled in. Year 7 do seem to have got off to a good start and certainly seem able to find their way around the school. A change of school won't be plain sailing for everyone so please do not hesitate to contact your son's form tutor or relevant subject teacher if you have any concerns.

Examination Results

There was some understandable concern in the sector about the return to 2019 grade boundaries. I am delighted to say that our students performed superbly at both GCSE and A level. The overall GCSE results hit 75% - the highest on record; A levels, too, were the highest for many years at 77% A*-B. Schools are, of course, 'judged' on the performance of their students, particularly the progress they have made. To me, however, it is more important to celebrate the individual success of students and the teaching and support provided by staff at the school. The A level results have propelled students to some fantastic universities - we have the highest number going to Oxbridge for some years and also a larger than usual cohort of 'Medics, Dentists and Vets'. My heartiest congratulations to all our students. I wish them all every success, be that in our Sixth Form or at another school, university, apprenticeship or the world of work.

Estate news

The six-week holiday was very busy indeed with a considerable amount of work taking place across the Estate. In addition to some of the routine upgrades and repairs, we have seen a number of exciting projects either underway or coming to fruition. One feature of the Sixth Form Centre was the installation of the raked seating in the Queen's Hall with quality AV to match. The units will also be useful, in that they will avoid some of the daily chair logistics which are time consuming for the Maintenance Team. The Swimming Pool will now be in use for lessons; we have formed partnerships with local swimming providers which will be of mutual benefit. Phase 2 of the Sixth Form Centre is making good progress and we are confident that this will be open at Half Term; the challenge with Phase 2 was the relocation of existing classrooms. As a result, we have three super new classrooms, one for Geography and two for Maths; Classics have also moved and are patiently awaiting the refurbishment of their two new rooms.

The SEND Department has newly refurbished accommodation to support the varied work they do to ensure that all students at RGS have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential. The Student Hub and Heads of Year are now in one place, close to the pedestrian gate - this is an important enhancement to our safeguarding procedures.

Awards

We were delighted to receive two awards before the summer. I am not a great collector of badges, but the process that the school goes through to achieve the awards is a powerful tool in our journey of perpetual improvement as well as being good development for staff who lead on them.

- **Artsmark**

(repeated for the benefit of new parents)

There is a lot of talk in the press about the squeezing out of the 'arts' in secondary schools. Not at RGS. I am delighted to announce that we have been awarded the Platinum [Arts Mark](#), a very prestigious award. Mrs Francis, Head of Art, spearheaded the application process, ably supported by the Art and Music Departments.

'You have an impressive and well-established reputation across arts and culture, including being shortlisted for 'Outstanding School Music Department of the Year.' Your GCSE Music numbers exceed the national average at the ISM Gold Standard, Fine Art numbers doubled, and Graphic Communication has grown since its launch, from 4 students to 2 classes of 22 pupils. Students have had the opportunity to engage in a plethora of arts and cultural activities and have been provided with opportunities to perform and showcase their work. Examples include The musical, 'The Producers' which sold over 1,000 tickets and raised £14,000 with profits used to update equipment. Pupils visit Pinewood and have also joined after-school workshops gaining valuable leadership opportunities. Staff share their expertise with other schools and the departments provide very good opportunities to showcase students' work. I would recommend that you now seek out further national platforms so you can share your excellent practice and secure your position as a leading advocate for the importance of arts and culture within schools.'

- **Mental Health**

We were also successful in achieving Silver in the Carnegie Award for Mental Health in School. You can read the report [here](#).

The Royal Grammar School has presented a compelling profile of evidence that demonstrates that they meet the requirements to be awarded the School Mental Health Silver Award. The School has used the framework and content of the Award to great effect to develop their mental health and wellbeing strategies, structures, and practices. Completing the School Mental Health Award has clearly given the school a framework to evaluate, improve and develop their practice.

An important part of our Mental Health support is our Counselling service. Here is a note from Mr Meddes, our Head Counsellor. *'Firstly, a thank you for your continued support of the counselling service over the past academic year. As a counselling team we have conducted 443 counselling sessions this academic year, helping 51 students with their mental and emotional wellbeing at some of the most difficult times for them. The success of the service relies on parents, staff and the students themselves, recognising when counselling support is required, leading to a high level of engagement and courage from students in the sessions. As we continue to develop as a service, our aim will always be to offer a supportive space for students to explore what is troubling them in the hope that it enhances the school experience for them. We very much look forward to working with students that wish to access the service next year.'*

Rowing

Congratulations to Jerry Anderson (Year 13) who competed for Great Britain, rowing in the Under 19 quads at the Coupe de la Jeunesse in Holland in July, and won Silver.

I will be in touch in a couple of weeks' time with a review of the activities from the early part of term.

With renewed thanks for your support - I look forward to working with you in the coming academic year.

With best wishes.

Philip Wayne

APPENDIX

I don't like to clutter my regular letter with do's and don'ts but there are a few points that I should like to make at the start of the year.

Uniform

Thank you so much to parents for kitting out your sons; although we had to be sensible during the first hot week, we have high expectations of your son's appearance and I am pleased to see that the now normal September climate means that our students are able to wear their full uniform at all times.

Every year, the newspapers report on a) disgruntled parents, who have not supported the school's uniform policy, complaining that their child has been challenged for an erroneous item or b) over-zealous responses from schools to uniform misdemeanours. At RGS, we aim to be smart, simple and straightforward, hence the lack of variation and, therefore, controversy. We are a little more flexible with hair nowadays as we need to be fair in meeting the needs of a diverse student body. That said, unseemly, extreme, dying and patterns is where I most certainly draw the line! Thank you for your support.

Communication in general

As with other walks of life, school communication has come a very long way since the Gestetner churned out reams of paper for boys to screw up in their bags! The aim is to keep you as informed as we can and as involved as you wish (hopefully a lot!)

You will receive 'School Comms' on a Monday and Thursday, save for occasional information that simply cannot wait. There is a certain amount of 'overload' at the start of the year, but it does settle down. You also receive a weekly 'upcoming events' schedule from which there are direct links to our booking system. I write a Headmaster's Letter a few times per half term which is generally a review of the previous weeks, with the odd 'soapbox' moment.

The website is a rich resource, with items of historical interest, statutory information and news. Please do follow our Twitter @RGSHW account and Instagram - these are topical, occasionally humorous, promotional or celebratory but we use neither for notice-giving or urgent information.

Our full staff list is on the School website. Staff can initially be contacted through admin@rgshw.com. Our staff do go the extra mile to support their students and are always willing to answer parental concerns or questions. May I respectfully remind us all that whilst professional protocol requires teachers to answer emails within a reasonable time, they often have full teaching days and may not get a chance until after the boys have left or they return the following morning. They should not be expected to reply by return or in the evening or at weekends unless it suits their working patterns. It goes without saying that we should all strive to write 'de façon courtoise'.

Parking

Please may I ask you to be considerate at the school 'drop-off'. By far the best place is on Green Road and your son can enter via the Boarding House Gate or walk up to Chadwick Street. Chadwick Street is best avoided for a drop-off as this is where the school coaches arrive and depart. The key point is that parents should not drop off in the Hamilton Road car park (though that is available for parking at evening events) and certainly should not stop on the zig-zags outside the reception, visitor or quad gates. The Council has installed cameras on this stretch of road.

Thank you in advance for your support.