

Collaboration

Noun

the process of two or more people or organisations working together to complete a task or achieve a goal.

Collaboration

Ethos of Learning

“All my happiest memories and achievements have involved the support and guidance of others.”

Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster

I don't really remember any impressive milestones I have achieved alone, possibly running a marathon a few years back, but that still required the support of my family to allow me to take the time out to train and prepare. I have not achieved anything as an individual for a very long time.

When I look back at my most pleasing moments in life they all involve other people, whether that is a fantastic Christmas Day, winning a rugby cup final, delivering staff training (sometimes!), achieving excellent school exam results last summer. None of these warm fuzzy feelings of success would have been possible without the support, guidance and involvement of others. It is also wonderful to share such success and look back at it with pride. Next weekend I am due to meet up with my old Chinnor Rugby Club side. They are a great bunch and I know the day and no doubt evening will be filled with reminiscing about this game and that game. The point is that success is enjoyed even more when it is shared.

The truth is that it is very difficult to achieve great success by oneself. Elton John might not have been the greatest musician

without the piano bought by his grandmother or the lessons he was provided with or no doubt the countless hours given up by his mother to enable him to perform. Sir Steve Redgrave might not have been one of the most decorated Olympians without the others in the boat rowing just as hard. I doubt Geraint Thomas would have won Sports Personality of the Year without the incredible Team Sky Domestiques. However, teams do not always function well, just look at our Government. It does sadden me to watch the news and hear all the jeering and lack of respect amongst political peers. They are supposed to be running our country, which is no doubt a difficult job, but where is the role modelling of respect, honesty and integrity?

To have a successful team I think you need a variety of personalities with a variety of skills underpinned by a very clear and common goal which you all agree with and are desperately trying to achieve. You need to be able to challenge one another but in a respectful manner and crucially you need to be able to listen and not be afraid to change your opinion based on what you have heard. You cannot possibly expect to be the expert in all areas.

I feel incredibly privileged to work with our team at RGS, where everyone is pulling in the same direction. I am particularly fortunate to work with our Senior Team. We are 8 very different individuals from a variety of different backgrounds and all with very different strengths. We are also a mix of different ages and experiences which I feel bodes well when shaping the present and the future of the school. I think we work well together. There is an immense amount of respect across the group and everyone's opinion is valued. That said, there are times when we disagree, and discussions can occasionally get a little heated, but there is always that current of respect even running through a disagreement. We also know that the team are all on the relentless pursuit of providing a World Class School. I would like to think that if students could see into our meetings they would be proud of us and they would also see the attributes of humility, honesty, integrity and respect that we are trying to instil in them.

We are fortunate in that we have picked great staff here at RGS, who are also right behind the vision for the school. Collaboration when you have this common goal in place becomes much easier.

Collaboration can be tougher for our students; they are often thrown into groups at the drop of a hat in the middle of a

lesson. You might not be with your pals, you may not have complimentary skills, you'll certainly be under a tough timeframe! And yet, when I pop into classrooms, I generally see exceptional collaboration. Students are listening, caring, analysing, reflecting and understanding. As can often be the case in small groups one or two individuals may dominate and that is an area we need to continue to work on. The more we can continue to provide our students with these opportunities both inside and outside the classroom the more likely we are to achieve shared success. Certainly, at RGS, our young men are more flexible, adaptable, caring and conscientious than those people leading the country! I am very glad I work here.

A final thought...

My own kids often say Teamwork makes the Dreamwork. They insist on saying it in an American accent with much hilarity, but it is one of the more sensible things they say!

For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: rgshw.com or Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster, arw@rgshw.com