

## HEADMASTER'S LETTER 28 March 2024



Dear Parent

### Goodbye

We are saying goodbye to Pippa Gamester, who is leaving RGS after an overall relationship of forty years. Pippa is married to Steve Gamester who was Head of School House, when it was a boarding environment. In those days, the Housemaster's wife had an 'ex officio' role (even to the extent of being interviewed for it) and I know that Pippa very much enjoyed her support work as well as bringing up her young family within a boarding environment. Following a period working elsewhere, Pippa returned to RGS in a number of administrative posts before her most recent, pivotal role as Curriculum Support Manager overseeing the School Census and the Management Information System. By this stage, Pippa and Steve had moved from School House to set up the new Fraser Youens boarding facility, which our boarders still enjoy today. We are very grateful indeed to Pippa and wish her and Steve a very happy new chapter in their lives.

### One more step...

You may have read in the news that the Government capital funding for academy schools has been much reduced this year. I am, however, very pleased to announce that we have been successful in securing £800k from Central Government to replace the roofs on the Junior Block, Queen's Hall and Music Centre as well as new fire doors for the Main Block. These are important projects that will not only improve safety and energy efficiency, but will also be a further 'tick in the box' to make the school estate fit for the future.

We have recently re-roofed the Cricket Pavilion from school reserves and, thanks to the support from Friends of Rowing, the old School Shop is to be converted into a more permanent space for our rowers to train on the rowing machines.

### Shrek!

This year's Musical Theatre production 'Shrek' was a resounding success with a strong cast, excellent band/orchestra all superbly directed by Becky Harrison (Trinity Players), Mr McDonald-Smith and Mrs Jashari (Director of Music). I must also pay tribute to the SLST (Stage, Lighting and Sound Team) who pulled off a technical triumph, ably supported by Mr Balaam. The SLST have faced several challenges this year, partly down to some additional Health and Safety measures which, vital though they are, do not always sit well alongside great opportunities which installing lighting rigs gives to our students. My thanks to all involved with this excellent production and to the audiences who packed the hall, night after night.

### Congratulations

Three Year 7 students (Hayden Pillai, Nikhil Velamala and Elliott Brookes) and four Year 8 students (Rithvik Rahul, Akash Suresh, Krish Siddhartha and Akshaj Rahul) earned their Bronze Crest Awards last term and have recently received their certificates. This is a huge achievement for our youngest students and recognises over 10 hours of independent scientific planning, research, experimentation, analysis and evaluation on a topic of the students' choice which were as diverse as "The 5 Second Rule" and "Making a Natural Ferrofluid".

### Senior Physics Challenge

On Friday 8 March we had a record number of 46 Year 12s take part in the Senior Physics Challenge, run by the University of Oxford. The Senior Physics Challenge is a national competition in which ten of our students achieved a Gold Award. This is an excellent achievement, with only 200 Gold Awards granted out of the 1000s of participants across the UK. Universities widely consider this the most prestigious award that a Year 12 physicist can win. The boys who received a Gold Award are: Zaahir Ali, Shyan Bera, Timothee Dusserre Cordonnier, Ishaan Barthakur, Issac Lee, Adam Boodhun, Eesah Waheed, Torr Ramsden, Shyam Yashoman and Oliver Persaud.

### Rugby

This week, we had an excellent attendance at the FRORGS awards ceremony in which we all enjoyed an excellent curry, listened to witty speeches by the various team captains and celebrated the many successes of this great game during the season.

### Boarding

As we approach the end of term please see the [Boarding Newsletter](#). Boarding is a very important part of our school and I feel certain that all parents will be pleased to hear about the range of activities.

## Fencing

20 members of the fencing squad displayed remarkable performances across various categories at the Public Schools Fencing Championships from 12th to 14th March.

**Day 1** saw James Martin, Esa Yazdani, and Sam Byerley securing commendable positions in the Mount-Haes Epee event, while Kai Morgan, Sarim Baig, Ayaan Khan, Zain Khan, and Sarib demonstrated their skills in the Junior Epee event. Notably, Liam Sheehan's impressive performance earned him the 25th position in the closely contested Senior Foil category.

**Day 2** involved further achievements, with Sarim Baig, Alex Roberts and Zain Khan representing RGS in the Junior Foil event. In the Mount-Haes Foil event, Loic Folmer, Feranmi Babtunde, Esa Yazdani, and James Martin showcased their abilities, while Henry Daley, Joe Devereux, Ben Kirby, and Aaron Tecke led the charge in the Senior Epee category.

**Day 3** highlighted the prowess of our fencers in the Mount-haes Sabre and Junior Sabre events, with Loic, Alex, and Sarim securing respectable positions. The Senior Sabre category witnessed an outstanding performance from Ben and Alex Stewart, placing 7th and 9th respectively. Commendable positions were also achieved Aaron, Henry, and Joe.

The School also got a prize giving mention for placing 5th in the Winston Cup, which is awarded to the school with the most accumulated points in all senior events.

## CCF

The CCF recently attended a weekend at Bramley, Hampshire (a former ammunition depot, now an army training camp) to conduct a field assessment exercise for 20 boys to pass 3- or 4-star fieldcraft. It was a great weekend and they worked incredibly hard, and earning the praise of the assessors. Corporals Poulton, Spencer and Prince led their sections admirably.

## RAF CCF

After 11 months of cancellations due to staffing, technical issues and bad weather, four RAF CCF cadets successfully flew last Thursday at RAF Benson. Now that they have flown, they will get a chance to do the ground training next term, which will award them their blue wings for AEF flying. There are a further eight slots for RGS cadets on July 11, so hopefully the RAF Section will finish the year on a high note.

## Religious Studies

I asked Mr Jack Webb, Head of RS, to reflect on current religious events.

*'As we approach the conclusion of the spring season, I wish to offer a reflective piece on some of the events this term. The Iftar event of 2024 proved to be a resounding success. It was an immense pleasure to participate in, and it's coming to fruition owes much to the invaluable support rendered by our esteemed colleagues and community members. I extend my profound gratitude, particularly to Mrs. Pickering, Mrs. Khan, and Mrs. Nasheeda, whose exceptional organisational skills were instrumental in the event's seamless execution. Their diligent efforts in adorning the hall, procuring tableware, and managing ticket distribution were truly commendable. Working alongside such individuals is indeed a privilege, and their contributions significantly enhanced the event's outcome. Additionally, I wish to express my appreciation to the Islamic Society boys for their eloquent speeches, which underscored the values of compassion, community, and positive change - pillars that epitomised this year's ethos. Their exemplary character is a source of immense pride, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to their parents for their unwavering support. May our community be blessed abundantly as they continue their fast, and Eid Mubarak to all upon its conclusion. Furthermore, this term witnessed notable developments within our Hindu Society. The leadership team from Year 8 introduced insightful practices to RGS, educating members of our community on the significance of worshipping murtis, including the ceremonial bathing of Vishnu's vehicle in milk. Witnessing this sacred ritual was truly captivating, and it was heartening to see our younger members taking the lead in such endeavours. In light of this, I extend my warmest wishes to those observing Holi—a joyous occasion marking the onset of spring and commemorating the legend of Holikah. Bonfires, vibrant colours, and traditional sweets evoke the spirit of this festive period, and I convey my sincere sentiments to all those partaking in the celebrations.*

*For Christians, we are now in Holy Week; the 'Triduum' commences tomorrow with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and then the celebration of Easter Sunday. Mr Booth, our Hon School Chaplain, led an assembly about Easter and its significance for Christians. We have observed several students engaging in discussions about their Lenten sacrifices. While some have chosen to forgo personal indulgences, others have embraced the ethos of altruism by committing to acts of kindness within our community each day. As a subject lead, I take great pride in witnessing our community wholeheartedly embrace diverse cultures, religions, beliefs, and practices. As Easter Sunday dawns, I extend my warmest wishes for a joyous and meaningful celebration to all who observe this auspicious occasion. In closing, as we reflect on the diverse and enriching experiences of this term, let us continue to foster an environment of understanding, respect, and inclusivity within our community. Together, may we strive to uphold the values of empathy, collaboration, and cultural appreciation that have been exemplified throughout our shared endeavours. Wishing everyone continued success and fulfilment as we embark on the journey ahead.'*

## White Smoke

Mr Noyes and I have been interviewing Senior Prefect Teams this week. As ever, the Leadership Selection Day is a very worthwhile activity and I am very proud of the achievements of all students who get this far. The white smoke will be seen very shortly after the Easter Beak.

Thank you for your support of your son and his school this term. Working as a partnership is very important and greatly appreciated. I wish you all a very Happy Easter.

With best wishes.

**Philip Wayne**