

HEADMASTER'S LETTER
11 May 2020

Dear Parent

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

The Prime Minister was, in my view, clear last night. **Stay alert, control the virus, save lives.** The message to schools such as ours is to make sure that our boys continue to receive the best possible education to prepare them for their futures. We will, therefore, continue to offer provision for boys whose parents need to work, a varied and challenging programme to years 7 to 9, concentrated study for Years 10 and 12 and an inspiring springboard into A levels for Year 11. We have already planned for this scenario, Mr Wallace will share these plans closer to the half term. We will endeavour to celebrate with Year 13 at some point before September.

Should guidance be such that we are able to welcome back Years 10 and 12, we already have plans for how we can operate the School for maximum effect for your sons. We will use the opportunity to offer physically distanced lectures, assemblies, interaction with teachers, all such that it reintegrates your son to a busier environment, and encourages him to interact once again with his peer group. This will be fortified by our virtual teaching through Teams. Flow around the School site will be managed by one-way systems and physical distancing.

VE DAY

I am not sure that I would have relished watching the 'Queen's address to the nation' when I was a teenager, so I'll forgive our lads if they chose not to do so. I do, however, find it inspiring that at ninety-four years old, The Queen, immaculate and as clear as ever, can continue to uplift and reassure a country with carefully chosen words, beautifully uttered.

The VE day celebrations, considerably more subdued than was the intention when the bank holiday was declared, reflected an event of immense historical importance seventy-five years ago. The build-up and the day itself will have provoked a range of emotions. I know that this is a difficult time for many of you, perhaps with bunting and 'physically distant' street parties of little appeal, but I do hope that you had the opportunity for some down time over the bank holiday weekend.

#LearnAtHome

We are now in our sixth week of #LearnAtHome. We have been constantly reviewing how we are working – the 'indicative' survey has revealed satisfaction in the key areas of:

- the School's communication;
- the amount of work being received and completed by your son; and
- the level of challenge in the work being undertaken.

This is good news. I would, however, urge you to continue offering feedback as there will inevitably be some inconsistencies. Staff have been delighted to receive the positive feedback, which is always passed on. Likewise, my Senior Team and Subject Leaders are able to discuss concerns sensitively with their colleagues.

Having taken stock I have my own thoughts on the progress we, collectively (by which I mean staff, boys and their parents) have made over the last six weeks. I do wish that the media would stop encouraging a negative view of school leadership by showing clips of headteachers seemingly flummoxed by the simplest of problems of creating 'one way systems' or removing desks from classrooms. This is an unfair representation of what the education sector has achieved in the last few weeks. A jolly neat trick, as far as I'm concerned.

What we have actually achieved, as a community, is to learn an impressive new skill-set. RGS teachers are probably working harder than they did as 'Newly Qualified Teachers' to reinvent their teaching. Furthermore, your sons are learning to time-manage, to hold themselves more accountable than ever before, and to support their families in different ways. The boys are acquiring and refining a new range of skills, too numerous to mention, but the chief are; heightened communication, greater self-awareness, resilience, self-discipline – all great assets which they will be able to take into the workplace; within this troubled time, we have found opportunity. Research shows students who are given the chance to manage their own learning consistently and significantly put more effort into their studies; we will learn from this opportunity and take the good with us into the future.

LAST WEEK

We have been delighted with the response to the Senior Prefect Challenge and the Inspiration Week activities. Please do send in photographs - staff really do love to see them and I'll always post them on Twitter @RGSHW if they come my way.

I have been particularly impressed by the pride which boys have taken in the Prefect Cake Making competition, some beautiful photography for the Co-Curricular competition, an array of experiments and manufacture many of which can be seen on my Twitter account RGSHWHeadmaster @RGSHW.

We were pleased to hear accounts of the fast for Ramadan, as suggested by Mrs Khan (Subject Leader for RS). For those who practise their faith, the lockdown has been particularly challenging. Christians could not participate in the most sacred of weeks, Holy Week, and the most joyous of festivals, Easter. Similarly, our Muslim families are celebrating Ramadan under the most difficult conditions, unable to attend the Mosque or to break the fast with extended families and friends. I am thinking of you.

The work undertaken by boys at the end of their GCSE/A level courses was, in many cases, impressive. The healthy take up of the EtonX courses by Years 11 and 13 was very pleasing – in the case of Year 11, nearly every boy registered and completed some or all of the course.

This week, Year 11 start their A level preparation courses - we expect all boys wishing to return to the Sixth Form to engage fully with these important preparatory steps.

THE GOOD SHIP, RGS

Our maintenance team have been hard at work with the opportunity to get started on our refurbishment programme. Several parts of the School, in some cases, untouched for 20 years or more are receiving some restorative treatment.

The cleaning contractors, who did not get off to a great start, have made incredible progress in classrooms, corridors, offices and lavatories. I don't think the place has been so clean.

The groundsmen have had a clear run to catch up with many jobs as well as maintaining the condition of the pitches for 'when we meet again'.

FINALLY

I have a little plaque at home, which I was given when I left a job nearly 16 years ago. I think this saying speaks for the RGS community;

'Take pride in how far you have come and have faith in how far you can go.'

Please continue to work with us, have faith in what we are achieving together.

We shall meet again.

Yours sincerely
Philip Wayne