

HEADMASTER'S LETTER

13 March 2020



Dear Parent

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Many thanks to parents who have been very supportive of the School in recent weeks whether through empathetic emails, in conversation or through practical offers of advice and expertise in particular areas. Due to the circumstances, I will be communicating with you on a more regular basis than usual.

Our readiness

We continue to follow DfE and PHE advice, but we are planning ahead responsibly as a school and as an employer. Should a member of staff or one of the boys be tested positive, Public Health England would come into School to carry out a risk assessment as a matter of urgency. I should like to remind parents that their sons should not be sent to school if they have a temperature or a new cough.

- The Queen's Hall has been set out with exam desks (for social distancing) in case a group beyond the classroom needs to come together.
- Communication plans for partial or full school closure will be via InTouch and will be posted on the School website.
- In the event of a closure, a daily communication will be sent to confirm the status quo.
- In the event of a closure, teachers will use Teams, CloudBox, email and/or the VLE to share resources with pupils. All work will be listed on SIMS for parents to monitor (boys will be expected to complete work to a high standard).
- We are being asked about GCSE and A level exams - at this stage we have no reason to believe these won't be going ahead, but rest assured we are in close contact with both the exam boards and the Department for Education who will be making decisions as required. As soon as we have more information, we will be in touch with you.

Whole School actions taken so far:

- Cleaning contractors have been instructed to pay particular attention to hygiene around the site
- Large assemblies have been suspended – smaller gatherings continue for now
- Water fountains are not being used; handwashing guidelines issued; NHS posters around the estate
- Parents' evenings have been postponed
- Trips risk-assessed and cancelled where necessary. You will have heard the government advice regarding trips abroad.
- School events/co-curricular activities are being dealt with on a case-by-case basis
- Introduced a 'travel declaration form' for all visitors to complete

There were very many disappointed families and teachers following the cancellation, at short notice, of the Japan trip. The School is deploying significant human and legal resource into working through this with insurers. Again, the assistance of parents, some of whom did not have a connection with the trip, has been appreciated.

It has also been very disappointing for the families and staff who were due to go on the other trips, which have been cancelled. We appreciated the attendance at meetings so that we have been able to remind parents of our overriding responsibilities as well as, sadly, the financial impacts.

We proceed with caution, but without panic. Any decision made by the school has to be balanced by the impact on the boys' education and cohesiveness of the school in a situation, which could need managing for the next four months.

STAFF NEWS

We have said 'goodbye' to Georgina Hinsliff who has moved to an administrative role at Tylers Green Middle School. As well as working on our management information system, Georgina worked on UCAS, reading and processing nearly 200 applications each year. We wish her every success in her new role. There is a vacancy on our website for a temporary position to fill the breach.

We are very pleased to welcome Sue Osborn as our Estates and Facilities Manager. On leaving school she trained at Peter Jones (the John Lewis in Sloane Square) and has worked for John Lewis as a facilities manager ever since. We are confident that, working with our newly formed, proactive Maintenance Team, we will see rapidly improved standards of cleanliness, timely repair and an inculcation of greater pride in the facilities we have.

We are also pleased to welcome Anamaria Amarii who joined our Student Development Team as an LSA.

EASTER REVISION

Easter revision courses are held in very small groups around the School. At this stage, we expect them to run. There are a few places available if interested [Easter Revision Courses](#).

CARRY ON CAMPING

We have recently secured the services of an external provider for our Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Wilderness Expertise. Over 200 boys took part in the practice weekend, which involved camping on the school playing fields and then undertaking a hike around the area. The 'real thing' takes them further afield, but the important skills are learned in a more familiar environment – a row of tents in the pavilion area, to be precise.

SIXTH FORM

It's been a good time to be a Sixth Former recently, with a number of activities to promote personal development. Around 100 boys have benefitted from the Presentation Skills Course, coached by local toastmasters. The boys are trained to prepare a three-minute speech with no, or minimal, notes and to deliver it to an invited audience. I was very pleased to attend one of the evenings last week and was most impressed by the presence, confidence and passion of the boys delivering their discourses.

We hold a weekly lecture series on a range of topics. Today, we were very pleased to welcome author and economist, Neil Record (himself a former RGS parent) who gave a talk on Personal Finance.

Most of Year 12 attended the Higher Education Conference at the University of Surrey. This not only whets their appetite for what the future may look like but also reminds us all of the importance of putting in the leg work for A levels.

Around 100 of our boys joined the young ladies from Wycombe Abbey in our joint Wycombe Management Conference, which has now been running for twenty-nine years. The students attend a range of talks on business/enterprise/personal development themes as well as taking part in a range of trading games with a competitive edge. Lord Bilimoria, founder of Cobra Beer, was particularly impressive and we are grateful to a number of OWs and RGS parents, past and present, who contribute to the conference as mentors.

PREACHING TO THE CONVERSION

We had a record turnout for the FRORGS Junior Awards last week with over 300 people celebrating the success of junior players and teams in a well-run evening with food (Noodle Nation) and a well-stocked bar. The evening kicked off with the 1st XV captain's address (Charlie Wood) with the individual team captains entertaining with their wit, humbling us with their gratitude. Many thanks to Mr Honeyben and all rugby staff who have shown such great commitment this season and to FRORGS for their stellar support, without which our programme would not be possible.

We took part in the Warwick 7s - some pleasing results, see the website for details. Sedburgh is just around the corner.

GOING SWIMMINGLY

We have been attending swim galas as part of a league since September. The finals gala was last week and we qualified for the finals in all three age groups. Seniors, Inters and Juniors. We came third in both the inter team and senior team with the juniors actually winning their competition. I shall look forward to presenting the trophy in assembly soon. Mr Pettifer informs me that the competition consists almost entirely of independent schools who are generally better resourced in terms of swimming pool quality. (We have already been through a tender process for the renovation of our own pool, which will be ready for September.) The swimmers involved were Luke Poulton, Keiron Pedrola, Henry Curzon, Mickey Royston-Hayes, Dominic Jowitt and Oren Staines.

CONGRATULATIONS TO....

- Matthew Duxbury, whose Arkwright Engineering Scholarship paper was very well received by the marking panel and is to be used as an exemplar for future candidates.
- Luke Poulton represented the South East at the National Swim Championships on Saturday and won the individual medley and the relay medley. This is a great achievement, well done.
- Ethan Hoekema for winning a Geography Scholarship to Aberystwyth University.

Philip Wayne