

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 23 January 2020



Dear Parent

It feels rather late to be wishing you a Happy New Year on the 23 January, but as this is my first letter of the term, I shall do so. I am very much looking forward to the term ahead. I spoke in assembly this week about 'chasing perfection might mean that we catch excellence' – in the context, of course, of all that we do.

There are a number of events taking place including the FRORGS Burns Night at Beaconsfield Golf Club (on the same night as the) the Jonathan Veira musical evening (for which tickets are still available) and our annual, spectacular Bat Oar Ball which raises money for all sports. I know that I will see many of you at one of these events and thank you most warmly for your support of the school.

STAFF NEWS

Richard Beeson, Estates and Facilities Manager, has left RGS, having held the post of Estates Manager for 16 months. We wish him well in his future endeavours. We also thank Gemma Heaven (LSA) who has offered excellent support within our SEN Department since 2018.

Welcome to Andrew Fletcher, Head of Cricket – we look forward to seeing Cricket going from strength to strength at RGS.

A GOOD END TO 2019

Our Christmas Lunch was a great event at which 800 meals were served. Many thanks to AiP, our team at RGS and to all those who participated.

We were also delighted to celebrate GCSE successes in a Presentation Evening and, in equal measure, very pleased to welcome back last year's Year 13 (Year 14, as they are known for this purpose!) to present them with their A Level certificates.

We finished the term in good voice, with a very well attended Festival of Lessons and Carols in High Wycombe Parish Church – there was some challenging music superbly executed by our choir of 120 boys. Our readers very clearly declaimed the Christmas message with the traditional lessons and a T S Eliot poem (Journey of the Magi). You may not be aware that T S Eliot taught at RGS, albeit for a short time, in the classroom now used by Mr Taylor.

BENEVOLENT FUND

We strongly believe in 'giving back' at RGS and our Benevolent Fund is one way we do this. Last term we raised £1,368.35 for Oxfam. We had an assembly given by an Oxfam representative as well as a workshop for the BenFund Key Stage 3 reps on the worldwide need for Oxfam's work. We also raised £853 in our Royal British Legion poppy sales for Remembrancetide. Our charity for this half term is Prostate Cancer UK, which we hope boys will support just as well.

MOCK EXAMS

By the time you read this, your sons will be coming home with news of their mock exams. Staff I have spoken to have been pleased to report positively on the boys' attitude towards these important exams. Whatever the outcomes it is important to remember that there are four months to learn from the experience and put into place 'such things as are requisite and necessary' to ensure that the summer results open the doors to future choice. Furthermore, each boy wishes to complete Year 11 and 13 with a sense of pride and satisfaction that no more could have been done.

Teachers will have a range of support and revision offerings rolling out in the coming weeks – one size does not fit all, so departments are best placed to decide what works for their subjects. The renowned RGS Revision Courses will be launched soon. Those who attend, both RGS students as well as those from other schools, speak very highly of the courses.

DESTINATIONS

We work very hard to support all boys in their progression to university or apprenticeships with advice, guidance and seminars. This is fortified by a number of symposiums and talks on careers matters, often presented by parents or OWs. We are proud of all of our students, whithersoever they go but at this time of year it is timely to report, with much pleasure, that 17 of our Year 13 boys have offers at either Oxford or Cambridge. This means, *ceteris paribus*, that with a further deferred entry student, eighteen will progress to an Oxbridge college in 2020.

Furthermore, many congratulations to Kam Lambert and Seth O'Connor who have secured unconditional offers at Ivy League universities in the USA namely Columbia and Princeton respectively. These are fantastic achievements for both students.

The Medics, Dentists and Vets (MDVs, is the acronym) are coming in now and we know that there will be offers for our other boys applying for our greatest institutions, filtering through over the next few months. I will keep you informed.

TRAINING DAY

We invest a considerable amount in staff professional development. The most recent training day included an E-Safety presentation – it was very good indeed and we plan to use a potted version of this to inform the boys about the positives and negatives of on-line activity.

We were also pleased to welcome William Wadsworth who spoke about his research into long-term memory and how to turn the content pupils have used before to gain knowledge about larger ideas. We plan to invite William, a Cambridge graduate, back to talk to Year 11 before their GCSE exams. Mrs Holdsworth, Assistant Subject Leader for English spoke about her research into providing systematic whole-class feedback. This, in addition to further work on the creation of an 'ambitious curriculum', led to a captivating day.

ACADEMIC JOURNAL

Robert Bowker in Year 13 has been 'editor in chief' of the second edition of the Academic Journal. There are some super, well-written and interesting [articles](#), which I commend to you. It may be a good idea to encourage your son to read an article or two in an area which interests him and perhaps encourage him to submit something in the next edition.

ESTATES

Having had a difficult few months with the new cleaning contractors, I am pleased to report that we are seeing green shoots of recovery. The fact that boys no longer eat inside the building (apart from designated areas) has greatly improved the classroom environment, in particular. Please note that there is now a ban on chewing gum anywhere on the school estate. This now carries a sanction on our Behaviour Chart.

As you probably know, we had to close the swimming pool at October half term for health and safety reasons. This has impacted on the curriculum as well as much needed income generation. We now have quotes and plans to render it operational again. This will include refurbishment of changing rooms, re-lining of the pool, new heating and ventilation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Aatish Anththathi who received Player of the Year in his age group and also across the 10-17 age group in the Bucks County Cricket 2019 season awards presentation last week.

Philip Wayne