

## HEADMASTER'S LETTER 17 July 2023



Dear Parent

This is my last 'Headmaster's Letter' of the academic year and I should like to thank all members of our school community - students, staff, governors, friends of the school and parents - for their incredible support. There have been many successful aspects to the year in terms of the exceptional all-round education we strive to provide here, achieved only because we all pull together to do so. I feel certain that parents will join me in thanking teachers and support staff for their hard work throughout the year.

### VALETE

My best wishes to all departing staff and thanks for their contribution to the life of the school. See above for photos of departing staff and new staff.

Mae-Sim Merry has taught Chinese as a TAA subject for eleven years. Sadly, this subject has declined in popularity; I find this quite hard to understand and let's hope that the subject, and Mrs Merry, return at some point in the future.

Francis Mullaly joined as Assistant Director of Music in 2017. He has done a first-class job in moving an already great department to new heights. We have impressive numbers of students taking exam courses in music. As you will know the quality of productions, concerts and services is second to none not only in quality but also in the sheer numbers of boys participating. We wish Francis well as he moves to a similar post at Watford Grammar School for Boys.

James Young has been at RGS since 2010 and was, deservedly, promoted to the post of Head of Chemistry. He has overseen improvements in student performance in public examinations and national competitions and has run an excellent department. James has also been a highly respected boarding tutor. James is moving to a similar post, not very far away, at Wycombe Abbey School.

James Eve was appointed as Assistant Head in 2016 and has more recently undertaken the role of Director of Studies. James has been an excellent member of the Senior Team overseeing Data, Assessment and Reporting. He has also been a great support to our Fencing programme being a presence during the weekly training sessions and taking the boys to competitions. Under his watchful eye, fencing has gone from strength to strength. A very fine teacher, James has made the decision to return to the classroom and has secured a position as Head of English at St Clare's, Oxford.

### Retirement

Declan O'Reilly joined RGS in 2005 and has inspired countless students in English in the past 18 years. A highly-respected member of the English Department, holding a leadership position overseeing A Level provision, we will all miss his academic and gentle presence around the school. A highlight for many of us was his annual 'Poetry by Heart' assembly where he would, flawlessly and without recourse to a script, recite sometimes lengthy poems with incredible poise, pathos and clarity.

David Wignall has taught at RGS for 11 years, teaching Psychology and Business Studies initially then later joining the French and German Departments. Mr Wignall has also been supportive of Hockey as an umpire. He will be on the road as soon as we break up to his second home in France, where he will enjoy the summers in the Burgundy region playing golf.

Steve England, Mathematics, who joined RGS in 2008, has proved to be an excellent teacher and specialised in maximising the performance of students of all mathematical abilities. I express gratitude too, as a parent of a boy who was taught GCSE by him. Sadly, Mr England has been unwell and has decided to take early retirement. We wish him all the best.

## RIP

We were very saddened to learn of the death of Old Wycombiensian, Yassvanth Prabu, who left RGS in 2019. We send his family our condolences, and will do all we can to support his brother, Rohan, who is a member of our student community.



## ARTSMARK

There is a lot of talk in the press about the squeezing out of the 'creative arts' in secondary schools. Not at RGS. I am delighted to announce that we have been awarded the Platinum Arts Mark, a very prestigious award and the highest grade available. Mrs Francis, Head of Art, spearheaded the application process, ably supported by colleagues in Art, Music and Drama. Here is an extract from the letter which we received on Friday.

*'You have an impressive and well-established reputation across arts and culture, including being shortlisted for 'Outstanding School Music Department of the Year.' Your GCSE Music numbers exceed the national average at the ISM Gold Standard, Fine Art numbers doubled, and Graphic Communication has grown since its launch, from 4 students to 2 classes of 22 pupils. Students have had the opportunity to engage in a plethora of arts and cultural activities and have been provided with opportunities to perform and showcase their work. Examples include the musical, The Producers which sold over 1,000 tickets and raised £14,000 with profits used to update equipment. Pupils visit Pinewood and have also joined after-school workshops gaining valuable leadership opportunities. Staff share their expertise to other schools and the departments provide very good opportunities to showcase students' work. I would recommend that you now seek out further national platforms so you can share your excellent practice and secure your position as a leading advocate for the importance of arts and culture within schools'*

## CHORAL EVENSONG

Our annual trip, this year, was to the RC Cathedral of Our Lady and St Philip Howard, Arundel, where the choir sang a cathedral repertoire to a very high standard. A beautiful venue and a lovely town, our boys were commended not only for their excellent singing but also their courtesy in the shops around the town. One shop assistant remarked that she had assumed the boys to be from a 'posh private school' (her words). Always delighted to receive compliments about your sons, I do think it sad that perceived wisdom correlates courtesy with a particular school sector.

We are repeating the Evensong at All Saints Parish Church in High Wycombe tomorrow at 1600. All faiths and none are welcome and the congregation is welcome, according to their preference, to see it as an act of worship or simply as a chance to support our boys singing wonderful music.

## UNIFORM

Just a quick reminder that we expect all students to adhere to our uniform policy. Please note that:

- Shoes, which must be black from Year 7 to Sixth Form must, indeed, be shoes and not any form of trainer (including the 'hybrid' Air Forces). As a rule of thumb, 'shoes' are foot apparel that can be polished.
- For Years 7-11, school trousers must be grey not black and socks dark.

Let's keep it simple and consistent to avoid debate at home and school.

## CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The Sixth Form are making excellent use of the downstairs area and it has come into its own for many other uses including for the Art Exhibition and staff training. I'm delighted to announce that we are now progressing to Phase 2, which is the transformation of a floor of the Junior Block into study spaces for the Sixth Form. The raked seating for the Queen's Hall is being installed over the summer holiday. The swimming pool is close to handover and we will see huge benefits to the School and local community. My thanks to parents, governors, Old Wycombiensians and the RGS Foundation who have supported me in bringing these projects to fruition.

## FINALLY

At the time of writing, our History Department are in Normandy on the D-Day residential, our Senior Rugby squad have flown off to South Africa for their tour and a group of Year 8/9 boys are in Scotland exploring the UK's last remaining wilderness. Our World Challenge group of Year 10 students leave for their Eswatini expedition on Wednesday. My best wishes to all who are taking part in school trips, including a number of our musicians who are on the Chiltern Music Academy tour of Catalonia.

I hope that examination results will be the just reward for the work put in. The majority of our boys progress to our Sixth Form, and I shall look forward to seeing them again in September. A few boys will be moving on to pastures new. I wish all leavers every success in the future and thank them for their contribution to RGS over the years.

I've been writing this, on and off, during the day today (Sunday), the weather being, at best capricious. I did manage to mow the lawn and take Freddie for a walk before the rain. Let's hope we have a summer of fine weather and that we all get a chance to relax with our family and friends, sans parapluie!

With my renewed thanks and very best wishes

**Philip Wayne**  
Headmaster