

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 10 October 2022



Dear Parent

Valete and Welcome

It's a Careers Lead 'merry go round' as we say goodbye to Sadia Azad, Careers and Higher Education Lead, who joined the School in September 2020. Sadia has done an excellent job in developing our Careers Education Programme and in supporting the UCAS process. We all wish Sadia every happiness as she moves to a similar post at Berkhamsted School. We are very pleased to welcome her successor, Sweta Thakrar, who joins us from Dr Challoner's High School. We wish Sweta every success in this important post.

Our vision, at RGS, is to offer an exceptional all-round education

In my previous letter, I referred to our Capital Investment Programme. I am very pleased to report that we are making good progress.

The Sports Hall roof replacement (funded following a bid to the Department for Education) and associated refurbishment, should be complete in time for the Spring Term. We have a proposal for the installation of solar panels which will result in a fairly speedy return on investment, as well as improving our sustainability credentials. The School will pay for these out of available reserves, as this will ensure we benefit more quickly than we would by using some of the co-operative/charity schemes.

The swimming pool, which has been out of use for some years, should be ready by March. The new changing facilities are already in place. The new canopy is currently under construction abroad and the work on the pool itself will continue once the Sports Hall scaffolding is removed. This is being funded by the Foundation, with some input from the School's reserves.

Sixth Form Centre Fundraising Campaign

The new Sixth Form Centre is also making rapid progress. This will be an exceptional facility to bridge the transition between school and university. The new centre will offer:

- a state-of-the-art study space downstairs which will enable our students to embrace a range of study styles – quiet, when required to do so by the Sixth Form Team, collaborative, small groups or whole year presentations with advanced technology to support learning;
- a renovated Queen's Hall, is to be fitted with some lecture-style seating and much improved AV facilities for our lecture series. Whilst preserving the integrity and vastness of the hall, there will be some refurbishment to give it a more modern feel; and
- a servery to offer coffee etc. during study times and refreshments at break and lunch.

This facility comes at a huge cost - from incarnation to completion and fit out, we are looking at around £1.6m. The Foundation, a number of generous Old Wycombiensians and some trust funds have provided a substantial amount of funding and the School will use some of its reserves. It was essential to get the project underway as delays would have resulted in spiralling additional costs.

Our campaign, to raise the remaining £500k has been launched; if we raise this amount we will protect school reserves from further erosion. If our campaign succeeds in raising more than this target, we will be able to think seriously about a further phase, which is the reconfiguration of the first floor of the Junior Block into Sixth Form Study rooms. We already have gifts, either in the bank or as pledges over time, of over £200,000 towards our £500,000 target, but we have some way to go.

Please do come along to one of our information evenings - you may be assured that you will not be asked for money on the evening. This is a chance to hear more about the project and to learn how you might be able to help. Every gift, large or small, will be gratefully received and, for those that wish, their name will be on a donor's board (though not, of course, the amount). We have a great campaign board who, like me, have all given a gift to the campaign. I hope that you will be able to join us in supporting this very exciting investment in our school.

- Year 7 Thursday 13 October
- Years 10/11 Tuesday 18 October
- Years 12/13 Monday 7 November
- Extra event Tuesday 15 November

Exam Results

We were delighted that last year's Year 11 and 13 boys achieved the best results since 'records began'. This is a result of two very hard-working cohorts taught by committed and passionate teachers. And, of course, support from home. Although there was, of course, some tolerance with grade boundaries, many of our subjects exceeded the results they achieved in the last two years when the grades were teacher generated.

- GCSE 76% of grades were at 7-9; this is, as usual, in line with the other boys' schools in the 'county'. (Some schools report, for some reason, on grades at 6-9 so, for context our figure is 93%.)
- At A Level 85% of our results were at A*-B, considerably ahead of all-male sixth forms within a large vicinity. These results have propelled the vast majority of our students to their university of choice.

Open Days

Our Year 8 students and Sixth Formers were excellent ambassadors for their school at our recent Open Evenings. Large numbers of families came to see what RGS was all about; they had to use their imaginations at times given the amount of building work taking place (see above). We are holding Open Mornings on Monday 17 and Wednesday 19 October - just after the results of the Transfer Test (11 plus) are known.

Biology Field Work

The Biology Department took a group of Sixth Formers off to Juniper Hall, Box Hill. Juniper Hall is owned by the National Trust and is let as a Field and Science Centre, once the home of the Broadwood family, the most renowned British piano manufacturers. The Year 13 Biology students undertook a variety of core practicals (recognised by the exam board) looking at the impact of coppiced and non-coppiced woodland, as well as the impact of human activity on biodiversity. All of the results and skills learnt will be applied to their A level exams. Every single student developed key skills such as team work, communication and resilience (especially after some cold and early starts!). Juniper Hall and the Field Studies Committee were very impressed with the work ethic of the students.

CCF

The CCF have been honing their skills at a Fieldcraft and Tactics Day at Skirmish. The joy (and pain) of Paintballing was a particularly inventive way of re-enacting combat and cover. This was followed by the Initial Recruits Cadre at Brampton, Surrey. 100 cadets were put through their paces as they learnt the 'basics' (the one year I attended it felt like anything but basic). They were supported by 15 instructors comprising staff past, present and future (the Head of French designate, who joins us in January) as well as former students. The CCF requires much commitment from staff and boys and I celebrate the effort everyone makes to render the CCF a thriving part of school life.

Year 7 Residential Trip

Year 7 enjoyed a two-day/one-night character education and team building residential. This took place at Phasel's Wood (just off the A41 in King's Langley - almost impossible to find, in my experience). The residential is a really important part of our Character Education programme and instils our values of Respect, Integrity and Aspiration. I heard great reports about how our students pushed themselves and, whilst understanding their limits, achieved more than they might have thought possible. Putting up a tent was a challenge for some! Rick Astley made a comeback - see this jolly phalanx singing an 80s classic <https://twitter.com/RGSHWTrips/status/1574826054224678920>.

French History Trip

The French and History Departments are currently organising their 'French History Trip'. This is a first-class experience not only for the opportunity to savour la vie francaise and to improve language skills but also to undertake a tour of the battlefields and associated World War I landmarks which is, in my view, unsurpassed.

Music

The first Music Department event of the year was our Chamber Choir joining their counterparts from Bishop Vesey's Grammar School (Sutton Coldfield), King Edwards (Stratford Upon Avon) and Bishop Wordsworth (Salisbury) singing Choral Evensong at St Peter's College, Oxford. Choral Evensong has been an inspiration for centuries of composers and to choral singers. Here is a short extract of the Nunc Dimittis (Sir Charles Stanford) conducted by our Director of Music, Francis Mullaly. [Stanford in C: chamber choir](#)

Sportsman's Dinner

Our Sportsman's Dinner was a great success. Many thanks to the FRORGS (Friends of Rugby) Committee, supported by our Sports Department and Events Team for their stellar organisation of this event. It is a key fundraiser for our Rugby programme and attracts a large crowd of OWs and parents past and present. An excellent meal was followed by very entertaining repartee between David Flatman and Tom Shanklin, former professionals and now media Rugby personalities.

Rugby

The Rugby season has got off to a good start; the U15 As are through to the next round of the NatWest trophy, having won their first round 68-0 and we have had some very competitive games (mostly wins, overall) against Reading Blue Coat, St Pauls and St John's Leatherhead. I send my best wishes to the U15s as they face Radley in the next round of the Cup.

With best wishes

Philip Wayne