

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 15 July 2021



Dear Parent

Thank you all for your support in what has been a very challenging year. It would have been impossible without the hard work of staff and governors at the School, the co-operation of the boys and the goodwill and understanding of parents.

VALETE

Steve Ashton, our Board Chairman, is stepping down after a significant period as a governor, Chair of Finance and subsequently Chair of Governors. A passionate advocate for RGS, the school which educated his two sons, Steve has brought experience and expertise to this important role. We are all very grateful to Steve and thank him most warmly. Marieke Forster joined RGS in 2007, initially as a teacher of Mathematics but, as a keen scientist, transferred to Biology. After a short, successful period as a Head of Year, I was very pleased to promote Marieke to the post of Assistant Head in 2018. Amongst her many responsibilities, her work in setting up the capacity for our online teaching and her stellar masterminding of all matters Covid stand out for me. It is in no small part due to her analytical approach and belief in 'the Science' that has enabled us to operate effectively throughout the last year. I wish her every success in her promotion to Deputy Headteacher at Aylesbury High School.

Alex Wallace was an Assistant Head when I arrived at the School. His youthful charm and bonhomie did not detract from his capacity for sheer hard work. When Mr Pantridge retired in 2016, I had assumed that I would be appointing an external candidate to replace him. Not so. Alex excelled throughout the recruitment process and has done so since. Alex is moving, with his family, to a residential Deputy Headship at Leighton Park School, near Reading. I shall miss Alex not only as a great colleague, first class deputy and as a friend. Good luck in your new post, Alex.

Dawn Booth is retiring, after more than 30 years at RGS. Having worked through the ranks of Head of Year, Dawn has been on the Senior Team for many years. A truly exceptional professional, Dawn has overseen pastoral provision at the School including SEND, behaviour, counselling services, wellbeing and safeguarding. Of all the senior posts in a school, this one requires incredible agility to changing guidance and trends and is, of course, a huge responsibility. Dawn is immaculately prepared for everything she does. I wish Dawn a very happy retirement and I feel certain that she will be very busy with her church and community involvement.

To all colleagues, many thanks indeed. I'm sure you will join me in wishing them all well.

SURVEY

Many thanks to parents who completed the parent survey. Although we had fewer participants this year, it still provides a useful snap shot of parent views. Comments are always helpful and were, indeed, very positive. As ever, there are suggestions that we can take on board to make further improvements. I will share the metrics and general themes in early September.

ON THE BUSES (or not)

Rarely a year goes by without there being some parent/council issue with school buses. In their defence, it is a costly business due to the size of catchment areas. That said, I am always happy to support parents who are having problems. If your son catches the 659T, please get in touch with rob@tullus.co.uk, a Year 7 parent who is circling the wagons to encourage some change.

PRIZEGIVING

Many thanks to all who worked hard put the virtual event together. 13000 hits - so it reached a wider audience than the Queen's Hall can. In case you missed it, please click on the [link](#). I commend OW Fergus Walsh's address and Adam Portch's fine performance of 'That's Life' to you. A real treat is the Art exhibition. Some fabulous work.

IN QUIRES AND PLACES

By the time you receive this, around 100 of our boys will be on a coach returning from London. Our choir normally sings the service of Choral Evensong at one of the Oxford college chapels, but they are rather too small for 100 to socially distance safely. Thanks to the Rector of the church of St Giles in the Fields, in the West End (a large, galleried, beautiful Palladian church off Tottenham Court Road) we have been able to rehearse and record the service there. It will be a great experience for the boys and staff (including the organists who get to play an historic instrument!). I'll put highlights on Twitter.

Finally, our very last event is a trip to the Lake District for a four-day self-supported operation in the high fells. Teams will be monitored throughout but, unless there is an issue, teams will be conducting themselves fully independently over the duration of the journey. For many of the students it is a culmination of up to eighteen months of work to achieve their gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

SCHOOL DAY

Many thanks for the feedback about the change to the School Day. With effect from 1 September 2021. The school day will end at 15.30. This is a trial for a period of one academic year. Boys must be in their form rooms by 08.40 each morning.

OWs

We were delighted to welcome back Christian Wade this week. Many thanks to Lewis Rundle, who has been doing work experience with us since November 2020. We wish him success at Bath University.

TESTING

Thank you for your continued engagement in the Covid-19 testing programme. Please continue to test twice weekly and report your results until the end of this week. The asymptomatic testing programme is being paused over the summer holidays. You should only participate in the asymptomatic testing programme if you are attending school over the summer for any reason. We are unsure about the Covid situation we will face in the autumn, so we want to be prepared for all scenarios. Subject to public health advice, testing may restart on return in the autumn. If it does, we have supplied your son with enough tests to ensure he can test twice before his return in September. We expect two tests to be conducted on Wednesday 1 September and Sunday 5 September. A further reminder will be sent out nearer the time. We will strongly encourage all students to take these tests so we can keep the school as safe as possible for the return.

You must report your child's test results, even if their result is negative or void. You should also keep a note of and share your child's results [here](#) and with the government at [report a COVID-19 lateral flow test result](#)

We will test all new Year 7 students twice on site.

The government will continue to review the future need for testing in light of any changes to the public health situation.

FINALLY

I wish you all a fantastic summer break, with fine weather and relaxation, renewing, as ever, my thanks to the whole School community.

With best wishes

Philip Wayne