

HEADMASTER'S LETTER 18 October 2021



Dear Parent

VALETE

We say goodbye to our Librarian, Jo Jones, who is retiring to Cumbria. Jo has built an excellent library both for study and recreational reading. We wish her, and her husband, a very happy retirement. Nicky Hines and Hiba Khan have offered first class support to students, in their capacity as LSAs. I wish them both well in their future endeavours.

WELCOME

Sophie Cooper has joined us as a member of our Student Hub team. Heather Harries joins us as an LSA. Very shortly, we shall be joined by Hilary Payne, our new Librarian.

OPEN MORNINGS

I am aware that those awaiting Secondary Transfer Test (the official name for the 11+ in Bucks) were very frustrated by the crashing of the Council website - the Council administer Year 7 admissions on behalf of the thirteen grammar schools. We shall look forward to welcoming those who have qualified for a grammar school place to our Open Mornings this week - please spread the word and invite parents to look at the admissions pages of our website. I am aware that not every child will have had the news they'd hoped for and I send my very best wishes to all Year 6 children at this time. I have been involved with admissions for many years now and I am always happy to help parents who may need a quick call about an issue. Do get in touch. Our Open Mornings take place on Tuesday and Thursday of this week, for more details click [here](#).

Here are a few facts about RGS - this may be of help if you are quizzed by parents of Year 6 students this week!

- 1435 boys, 174 staff, 70 boarders
- We are usually full from within catchment on first allocation, though some places may become available at second allocation
- Last year our boys achieved 90 % A*-B at A level; 80 % Grades 9-7 at GCSE; 16 boys went to Oxford or Cambridge; two boys went to Ivy League universities; 27 boys went off to be medics, dentists or vets (MDV). In the current Year 13, 75 boys have applied for courses at Oxbridge or as MDVs

BOARDING

- Boarding is consistently outstanding at Ofsted
- There is no catchment area for boarding
- Weekly boarding in Year 7, with ten dedicated, experienced boarding staff who help boarders settle quickly
- Each student has a designated Boarding Tutor and a buddy (Sixth Former)
- Boarders have a designated activity programme every day taking part in Dodgeball, Archery, Climbing along with many other activities
- For the last decade boarders have outperformed day students in terms of GCSE and A level results; this year, eg, 97 % A*-B at A level

BAT OAR BALL

Our sports provision is only possible due to the generous support of parents and, increasingly, sponsors. The very successful Bat Oar Ball on Saturday was not only a great social occasion, with many parents and friends remarking how good it was to be back, but also the event which helps resource all sports through the fundraising on the night. Many thanks to the organisers, Mesdames Henry, Bignell, Warner and Wallace (plus husbands!) sponsors, caterers, bands and of course the 260 of you who ate, drank and were merry!

CCF

The CCF have been at their training camp at Bramley. CCF is an important part of our School – please have a look at their Twitter feed @RGSHWCCF for some excellent action shots.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The AGM, on Zoom, was well attended and it gave the Committee the opportunity to celebrate a very successful fundraising year, chiefly through the CrowdFund which has improved the IT experience for a number of departments as well as paying for canopies for the outdoor dining area, which will be installed in the next few weeks. Ram Boyapati and Mansi Goel have now stepped down as Chair and Treasurer respectively, justifiably proud of their achievements. The constitutions of most parents' associations have the Head as the 'president' - this means that I take over the part of the meeting to elect (or rather cajole) parents to step forward to positions of responsibility. I was delighted, probably for the first time ever, to have a full set of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer within minutes. Your new team are Sonia Chadha-Nihal (Chair), Lewis Davies (Vice-chair), Parvathy Mahesh (Secretary) and Aude Winchester (Treasurer).

The most recent event was the Year 7 Welcome Evening, an informal event for parents to meet the parents of their son's form mates and, where possible, the Form Tutor. The PA are hoping to run a similar event for Year 8 parents in the coming weeks, conscious that no such event was possible last year.

YEAR 8 ACADEMIC EVENING

We have had very good feedback on the Year 8 Academic Evening, presented by our Director of Studies, Mr Eve, and Head of Year, Mr Fossey. We were very pleased to welcome William Wadsworth, who gave a presentation on the science of learning, but in a practical way to help parents support their son's learning. The boys have also benefitted from a presentation from him. William shares a lot of his tips through his Twitter account from which you can find further links to his extensive work.

ASSEMBLIES

Until the pandemic, we held three assemblies for the whole School, divided into 'junior' and 'senior' three times a week. As with many aspects of life, the 'pause' gave us the opportunity to rethink. I had received feedback from both form tutors and senior boys that the assemblies programme seemed relentless and that the vital bond that should be developed in form time was not really possible. We amended the pattern to one 'Headmaster's Assembly' per week for each year group as well as house and year assemblies taking place at other times in the week. Last week, we had an excellent presentation by Dom Wood and Jules Tate. Mrs Watson (Head of Psychology and newly appointed Counsellor) came to see me at the end of last year requesting that we have high profile student leadership in the area of Mental Health. Dom and Jules have fulfilled this brief and made a great impact on staff and boys alike with a very powerful 'It's OK not to be OK' message. We have maintained a tradition of hymn singing in the Junior Assembly (I choose them carefully to avoid overly sacramental texts). Singing is known to be good for mental health and it was quite moving to hear Years 7 and 8 belting out 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', led by Mr Chitham-Mosely on the organ (with its new speakers). It could well have been an episode of Songs of Praise!

SPORT - a few updates

It was super to see over 90 Year 7 boys representing their School at Rugby - the start of a very exciting journey. We have had some very good fixtures already, a balanced profile of results with, always, something to learn. Our Senior squad has been plagued by injuries so we are all hoping that we will be back at full strength soon to allow both the first and second teams to flourish. That said, the seniors had a very successful weekend at St Jo's (St Joseph's School, Ipswich) annual national rugby festival, at which we were the only English state funded school in attendance. On the second day, our team was unbeaten. With no points conceded they won the Plate. Many congratulations to our boys and thanks to their coaches.

Our Rowing Club continues to thrive with great success for the J14 and J15 Quads at Reading Small Boats Head. It is super to see so many young rowers getting involved in a great sport. We are fortunate to have good working relationships with Longridge (just by the bridge at the Bisham/Marlow interface) and are working with the company to improve the facilities we use there.

The RGS Fencing team has returned to the road this term, with fixtures at Bradfield College and Winchester. Eighteen months without a competitive schools match showed at Bradfield, as a relatively inexperienced side under the captaincy of Y13 George Hill was edged out in all three weapons, but the team regrouped to win 2-1 at Winchester.

We have had more than 50 Year 8 Boys taking part in trials for the Cricket Development programme. 2022 will be an important year for RGS cricket as we will be hosting the RGS Cricket Festival. There are six 'Royal Grammar' schools across the country - Colchester, High Wycombe, Lancaster, Guildford, Newcastle, Worcester. Previously all grammar schools, the latter three became independent when their local authorities made the decision to opt for a comprehensive education system, when councils could dictate such matters. More information about the Festival in due course.

Squash - On Wednesday a group of Y10-13 boys went to Abingdon School for their first Squash match in over a year; in a very competitive but friendly fixture they won three of the seven individual matches.

The ESAA Cross Country Cup was successful across our three squads with Alden Collier winning the inters and Ollie Meadowcroft coming second in the seniors.

Swimming - Our intermediate and senior swimmers enjoyed great success at the Wycombe Abbey Gala last week. Our own pool, by the way, will be back in action this academic year; the changing rooms have been refurbished and we are assessing various funding options to re-line the pool and replace the heating and the 'building'. Dads who were at the School may remember it being an open-air pool; a conservatory style cover was fitted many years ago but has now seen better days and we plan a more substantial structure to render it fit not only for our students to use, but also as a commercial facility to create revenue for the School.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

This Wednesday is our [Autumn Soiree](#). The good news is that it is free of charge, but you do need a ticket so that we know how many will be coming. It will be an informal, round table and bar with the Big Band and Trad Jazz, a few select solos from our Year 13 students, and possibly even a guest spot for the Music Department staff and guests! We are especially blessed this year to be able to include our Chamber Choir, fresh off the back of their exquisitely sung evensong at St Peter's College Oxford earlier this term.

Open-air Service of Remembrance – Thursday 11 November

This is an exceptional, traditional event with the whole school, staff and boys, joined by parents and friends of the School in the Quad. I am accompanied by the Deputy Headmaster, our Hon Chaplain and a representative of the armed forces for a period of reflection, act of remembrance and the laying of the wreath. More details to follow.

Burns Night – Saturday 29 January

If you enjoy 'stripping the willow', 'Miss Millighan's Strathspey' (the mind does, indeed, boggle) or are amenable to a 'dashing white sergeant', then Burns Night is just for you. It will take place in the Queen's Hall, with traditional haggis, neeps and tatties, bagpipes and the address to the haggis. Please save the date and book your tickets when they are on sale.

With best wishes.

Philip Wayne