

24 June 2021

Dear Year 8 Parent

I would like to introduce myself as your son's Head of Year.

For the past nine months, until this recent half term, I have been covering a maternity role in the Boarding House as Academic Housemaster, during which time Luke Pettengell was interim Head of Year for your son. I am delighted to return to the Head of Year role and will be with your sons as they make their journey through Year 9 towards their GCSEs.

What a challenging time it has been. It is not lost on me that many students have experienced significant disruption, not just to Year 8, but also to their introduction to life at RGS since joining at the start of Year 7. Your sons should be commended for getting through it all, with good humour and grace in many areas. However, those who have emerged with some emotional wounds are not alone – it has been tough for many – and we are certainly aware of the mental health concerns that are shared nationally and in our community.

This summer please do encourage your sons to be active, to be outdoors and to socialize as much as they are allowed. Whilst some are heading on staycations, I am a big believer in what micro-adventures can be achieved within a short walk from the house, or even at home. A boring week can be transformed by camping in the garden with some friends, going 'off grid' for a night, or planning a nature walk in the woods. I used to get lost for hours making a bike race track in my local woods and racing around it – even if there were a few scrapes along the way. Dependency on IT has been essential to maintain remote learning, and some barriers have been lowered to facilitate this. If possible, reintroducing sensible and agreed limits for gaming could be a wise move. No phones in bedrooms, and no gaming after a certain hour are very fair suggestions for young teenagers.

The boys all know that I am hot on values and on showing these through our behaviour. The disruption to the year has led to many boys struggling, a little, to adapt to the mature RGS manner at times. This is no fault of theirs, and is actually very understandable, but it is something which I will be working on with them in school and would appreciate your support at home. Good manners, pausing before we act or say something silly, awareness of the major global influences of our time, and compassionate connection to those who are experiencing difficulty, are all things I am keen to promote in an inclusive and broad-minded way.

The boys know that my office door is always open to them and the same goes to parents. If there is any way which I can offer support, or if you'd simply like to say hi, then please do arrange a time or send an email.

Very warm wishes,

**Andrew Zair**

Head of Year 8

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