

HEADMASTER'S LETTER  
8 March 2021

Dear Parent

I read an interesting blog in the Times Educational Supplement (the teacher's equivalent of 'Horse and Hound', 'The Grocer' etc) which referred to the nation being rather *like 'the Blue Peter tortoise, being lifted out of its cardboard box of enforced hibernation. And it begins with our children and young people – and the wide range of staff who weave a special kind of magic across our schools and colleges'*. Blue Peter badges all round, at RGS I say to both my staff and students who have coped magnificently throughout.

During this week, we shall maintain our online provision for all apart from Years 11 and 13 with boys coming in at specified times for their lateral flow testing. I am aware that this is resulting in journeys for parents, and I should like to thank you in advance for your co-operation. The testing operation has been a feat of organisation undertaken by a stellar team at School. I have been privileged to support the team by assisting in the processing centre along with other staff members and parent volunteers. Our phased approach will be less disruptive for learning - all boys in school from today would have resulted in lots of boys out of lessons. Furthermore, our large space, the Queen's Hall, is being used for the Year 13 and Year 11 assessments.

Today we welcome back Year 11 for their week of 'in school' teaching in advance of their assessments next week. Year 13 are on study leave apart from when students come into RGS for one of the assessments. We are committed to giving all our students the opportunity to achieve their best possible grades. Guidance from School will be out shortly. We are still awaiting Ofqual guidance in some areas but what I can tell you is that our boys will have ample evidence on which teachers can draw to generate their grades, including the results of tests under controlled conditions, such as the March and May Assessments, as well as other sources of evidence derived from work throughout the course.

An especial 'welcome back' to all our boarders who returned last night to Fraser Youens House. The boys who have been boarding throughout the lockdown period have, I'm sure, noticed the difference in the catering, following the appointment of our new caterers, Cucina. The excellent kitchen team remains the same, but a new set of menus and approach has refreshed the offer. Cucina, by the way, have also now taken over the School Shop and will be providing more healthy offerings, to complement some of the previously preferred options. Fine coffee, too! The company will also be taking over the school dining room which will, as a part of their branding, be known as The Restaurant. I have been impressed when I have visited schools for whom Cucina is the contractor and I am confident that we will all enjoy what they have to offer.

We are now starting to put our School calendar back together. What we are not planning to do is to press the 'RGS as it always was' starter button - there are many things, as in other industries, that we have learned during this last year and many we can do differently, and better. I am sorry for Year 10 parents that we have had to put the Parents' Meeting back by a few weeks; the turnaround of assessments is key to ensuring that our grading process is robust and teachers need to the time to do this important work. Parents who have already experienced an 'online' progress appointment will know that it is preferable to coming into School, trying to park and sitting around in the Queen's Hall on red alert lest another parent jumps into your appointment!

I would like to remind all parents and boys that we need to be scrupulous with hand washing, sanitising and social distancing (which I know is a real challenge). We also expect the wearing of masks to be the norm. I am aware that it has been the subject of debate in the media; as far as I am concerned it is congruent with a safe school and was a chief factor in our having so few cases in the Autumn. Let's all stay safe.

Whilst we will be expecting full uniform (I am wearing a suit today for the first time in a few weeks) we understand that the usual sartorial RGS elegance will take a few days to be restored. Having seen a number of boys on Zoom calls recently, hairdressers and barbers will be very busy, once re-opening. All we ask is that boys, school and parents work together to get back on track with the hallmarks of the School as quickly as we can.

Conscious that there may be some anxieties in the next few weeks, Mr Zair has produced a [meditation video](#) which you may find helpful. I am aware that not every boy is, like a coiled spring, desperate to get back. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there are any concerns about returning to school.

You may also like to watch these two videos from the winners of our Song Writing Competition. Having taught music for many years, I know the skill and time that goes into producing such great work. I am sure that you will enjoy them. There are more to follow, I understand.

Junior winner – Arya Mukherjee with '[Fighting for Life](#)'.

Senior winner – Jack Chesney with '[Borrowed Happiness](#)'.

Very best wishes

**Philip Wayne**