

## **A Report from the Governors of The Royal Grammar School, 2016 – 17**

### **Introduction**

The Government requires all school Governing Bodies to focus primarily on four critical areas –

- ❖ Ensuring that the long term strategic direction of our school is clear
- ❖ Holding the Headmaster to account for educational outcomes
- ❖ Overseeing the financial management and performance of the school, while
- ❖ Ensuring the safety of all members of the school community

This report will focus on these aspects during the academic year 2016 – 17

### **Who are we?**

Your Governing Body is currently made up of seventeen Governors, all serving a four year term of office (with the exception of the Head). This breaks down as :

- ❖ 4 staff Governors – Philip Wayne (the Headmaster), Shradha Tan, Martin Goodier and Rachel Gilyeat.
- ❖ 4 elected parent Governors – Karen Clark, Alex Hannaford, Lindsey Masson & Gerard O’Keefe
- ❖ 8 community Governors – Sarah Abbas Warrraich, Steve Ashton (the Chair of Governors), Belinda Avery, Alison Houston, Arif Hussain, Johnny Nichols, Raza Rizvi & Nick Warnock-Horn. Nearly all of these are recent past parents.
- ❖ 1 Foundation Governor – Tim Maunder, the Chair of the Foundation Trustees.
- ❖ In addition we are supported by a “Responsible Officer”, Emer Beard, who acts as an independent internal auditor

Community governors are appointed by the Governing Body and are people who, in our opinion, have the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school. They are normally current or ex parents.

During the year 3 community governors and 1 staff governor stepped down and have been replaced.

### **How do we work?**

The full Governing Body meets once a term (twice in the Autumn term). There are four main committees which meet each term:

- ❖ Education – in order to ensure that all students are prepared for life in modern Britain it reviews:
  - the curriculum (KS3, KS4 & KS5) and the progress and attainment made by all
  - marking, assessment and reporting
  - policies and procedures in line with government guidelines
  - safety and pastoral care
- ❖ Finance – in order to ensure our funds are properly managed and that we achieve the best value for money it considers:
  - the current and three-year financial outlook
  - financial management, policies and procedures
  - future income generation strategies

- ❖ Personnel – in order to ensure that we have the best staff at all levels and that they are well trained and fairly paid it considers all matters related to the safe recruitment, employment, development and performance management of all staff
- ❖ Estate & Premises - considers premises matters and health & safety requirements

Other additional committees / panels relating to pupil and staff discipline, parental complaints and admissions appeals are convened when required. These appeals committees met 3 times in 2016/17, to hear 12 cases in total.

There is also a Strategy Committee, attended by the Chairs of the main committees. It meets termly to consider longer term issues and senior staff pay.

All governors are expected to sit on at least one committee. Many take on an additional responsibility. Governors have an excellent attendance record at termly meetings and no meetings have been cancelled because they are not quorate (the minimum required to make legal decisions).

Further information about the Governing Body can be found on the school's website :

<http://www.rgshw.com/382/about/governors-2016-2018>

### **A clear Vision for the future**

A thorough review of the school's long term strategy has been undertaken, led by Philip Wayne the Headmaster, resulting in an updated Mission and Vision, together with a long term plan.

Our Mission, being our statement of what we come to work for every day, is the constant yardstick for everyone's efforts. As such it applies principally to staff and boys, but is equally relevant to parents and Governors, to explain what the school is all about.

“Together our mission is to develop and to become worldly-wise, self-assured, high-achievers through an exceptional all-round education”.

Our Vision is an ambitious statement of intent around future goals. We believe it to be an invaluable aid in terms of attracting both the next generation of students as well as recruiting and retaining talented staff.

“Our vision is to be seen as world-class through offering those most naturally able, irrespective of their background, the best all-round education offered by a UK state school”.

This is not a description of where we are now, but our aspiration. It is an ambitious and demanding strategy but one to which the entire management of the school is whole-heartedly committed to delivering over the coming years.

These are then underpinned by a detailed strategy, divided under 5 headings:

- ❖ **Teaching and Learning**, covering aspects such as: recruitment & retention of the best quality staff; development of teaching & learning;

- ❖ **Outcomes**, covering, for students: progress and academic results; the curriculum; co-curricular provision; the development of the 6<sup>th</sup> form; student development & considerations around university and beyond. For staff it includes the well-being and performance of both teaching and support staff
- ❖ **Facilities**, covering: refurbishment of facilities and how that is funded; the Boarding House, security; sports facilities; staff accommodation; upgrading of access points; disabled facilities.
- ❖ **Community Engagement**, including: Branding and marketing; how we engage with old boys, parents and other stakeholders; how we support other schools; options for how we may expand our offering
- ❖ **Financial Control**, the key elements being: achieving a sustainable balanced budget year after year; maximising income to fund future development

Progress against the strategy is monitored termly as part of the work of the relevant committees.

### **Academic Achievement**

The Headmaster attends all committee meetings and presents a formal termly report at full Governing Body meetings. This report tracks progress towards our annual plan and Vision objectives. It also outlines pupil progress, particularly any vulnerable groups, pupil premium children and those with special needs. Questions and challenges to the Headmaster are recorded in the meeting minutes. We have a rigorous Performance Management Review process for all teaching staff.

The public examination results for 2017 continue to be very good:

- ❖ 16 boys gained entrance to Oxford or Cambridge Universities (13 in 2016)
- ❖ The percentage of A\*, A, B grades at A2 Level was 74%, (compared to 73% in 2016). The average attainment grades at A level were 2As and a B.
- ❖ Consequently 73% of students achieved a place at their first choice university, with 56% attending a “Russell Group” university.
- ❖ At AS Level 80% of all grades achieved by the students were A or B, which compares very well with the results achieved in 2016 (74%)
- ❖ At GCSE 99% of the candidates gained five grades A\* to C (99.6%, 2016); 90% achieved the English Baccalaureate (93%, 2016); and 63.7% of all results achieved A\* - A grades (slightly above the 63% achieved in 2015).

Grading of GCSEs is changing to a 9-1 system. In those subjects that have already changed a large number of our boys gained the new ‘9’ grade (equivalent to a high A\*). The School's results significantly out-stripped the national rate for the new grade 9.

- ❖ In Maths, 34.8% of our boys scored a 9 (national rate 3.5%)
- ❖ In English Literature, 25.8% scored a 9 (national rate 3.3%)
- ❖ In English Language, 16.2% scored a 9 (national rate 2.6%)

To ensure that standards are continually raised, the school operates a programme of observation of lessons, staff training and visits by former inspectors. The Academy also undertakes a comparison of results from entry to Key Stage 3 and GCSE and from GCSE to A level, to assess value-added, and participates in national programmes looking at value added through the key stages.

Details of GCSE, AS & A Level results can be found on the school's website:

<http://www.rgshw.com/2925/academic/a-level-gcse-results-2017>

## **Finances**

On the Finance committee 4 individuals have financial or commercial backgrounds. We operate within the guidelines of the Academies Financial Handbook and our internal Financial Regulations Manual. A scheme of delegation ensures clarity of expenditure authority limits. Governors approve the budget plan each year based on the key activities outlined in the strategic plan. There is also a review of the 3-year outlook taking into consideration likely student numbers and the costs of teachers and premises. We are grateful for the work of Emer Beard, our Responsible Officer, who runs a termly audit to ensure that all financial policies and procedures are rigorously followed.

The school continues to operate against a very challenging financial background. The main source of funding is the General Annual Grant [GAG] received from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). In 2016/17 this grant increased by just 0.3%. This increase was more than absorbed by increases in staffing costs, particularly through higher contribution rates for teachers' pensions and for National Insurance.

Despite this difficult background the financial position of the school remained strong during the financial year. We operated a balanced budget (in which expenditure was fully covered by total income). A summary of the key numbers in 2016/17 (£'000) :

- ❖ Income from central Government : £6,258 (£6,196 in 2016)
- ❖ Expenditure : £6,479 (£6,340 in 2016)
- ❖ Other generated income (from donations, lettings, courses) : £279 (£230 in 2016)
- ❖ In year surplus : £58 (£86 in 2016)

Overall expenditure significantly exceeds the income from Government, creating an operational deficit of £221,000. The generous support of parents and other income generating activities are essential to enable us to balance the budget and to invest in school improvements.

These figures exclude the Boarding House which is required by the ESFA to generate a small profit (8% p.a.). These funds are "restricted" - they may only be used for the maintenance and development of the Boarding facility.

Unrestricted reserves improved over the year by £61,000. We have approved capital expenditure of nearly £360,000 to be invested in improving the fabric of the school and the boarding house. Part of this was made possible by a successful bid for a grant to improve site security.

Careful management of the financial resources of the school means that we remain in a stronger financial position than many of our peers.

Details of the income & expenditure and the assets of the school can be found in the full report on the website.

<http://www.rgshw.com/1843/about/governors-2016-2018/governor-reports-and-documentation>

## **Safety**

The Governors operate a risk management strategy which complies with current best practice and sets out the processes and responsibilities for risk management. Four broad areas of risk are carefully monitored – safety, financial, infrastructure and reputation.

- ❖ Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure the safety and security of students and staff. An annual Health and Safety audit is conducted, with a designated Health and Safety Governor. An effective Child Protection policy is in place and is reviewed annually in order to safeguard all students. Regular training is provided for all staff and governors on all aspects of child protection, safety and awareness of emerging issues, such as radicalisation.
- ❖ Financial risk is mitigated through the discipline of an annual plan, approved by Governors in the summer term for the following academic year, starting in September. This sets the expenditure limits for all departments. The financial aim of the annual plan is to operate within a balanced budget.
- ❖ It is a major challenge to maintain and upgrade the older buildings on the school site. This risk is reduced by managing a planned maintenance programme. The school has produced a strategic development plan to upgrade the buildings and the facilities over the long term.
- ❖ Demand for student places at the school is good, based on its reputation for providing an outstanding and rounded education. This reputation could be undermined should academic standards fall or be perceived to be deteriorating. Student progress is closely monitored throughout their school career, not only at the time of exams and there is a major focus on academic performance within the strategic plan. Students are constantly mentored and coached to achieve their full potential.

The entire school community was devastated by the death of a beloved student, Matthew Hitchman, while on a trip organised through an external agency. An independent review has confirmed this to be a tragic accident and has not revealed any fundamental failure in the risk management or policies of the school but this cannot ameliorate the terrible sense of loss. The Governors extend their heartfelt condolences to Matthew's family and friends.

## **The future**

Over the coming year the Governors have agreed the following priorities with the Headmaster:

- ❖ Continuous improvement in the quality of teaching & learning
- ❖ A focus on well-being to support recruitment and retention of staff
- ❖ Setting ever higher expectations for students' aspirations, ambition and progress
- ❖ Review the curriculum
- ❖ An ambitious and exciting programme of improvement of facilities and infrastructure

Many of these entail a longer term perspective and more detail will be shared as the year progresses.

## **Want to get involved?**

We always welcome suggestions, feedback and ideas from parents or the local community. Perhaps you are interested in becoming a Governor? The Chair of Governors, Steve Ashton, can be contacted via e-mail to the Clerk to the Governors, Caroline Cobb ([cyc@rgshw.com](mailto:cyc@rgshw.com))