



Ripon Grammar School

Engineering Specialism within a Grammar School



GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS: 2016-2017

Introduction

This annual report provides parents and others with an overview of Ripon Grammar School's main activities and achievements over the last academic year. Governors are always keen to establish effective communication with parents and provide opportunities for dialogue; one of the characteristics of good and outstanding schools is the feeling of inclusion that all members of the school community have in furthering the achievements of the students and enhancing the success of the school. Should any parent wish to contact a school governor contact details are available on the school website: www.ripongrammar.co.uk.

Governors' role

The full governing board (FGB) meets four times each year but governors discharge their responsibilities largely via their six committees: Boarding, Curriculum, Finance & Personnel, Pastoral, Premises and Publicity & Community Liaison. The principal role of the committees is to look in depth at the work of the school by being analytical, innovative and creative yet challenging and supportive of the Headmaster and staff. The committees regularly scrutinise the school's strengths and weaknesses and, in particular, examine how any identified weaknesses are being addressed. As a full board, governors are responsible for setting the school's strategic direction, ensuring resources are used to maximum effect and formulating improvement and development plans in discussion with staff. Thus governors have been involved in updating and approving the five-year School Improvement Plan for 2017-2022.

Governors are also charged with keeping abreast of changes in education nationally and the past year has seen the start of an unprecedented array of changes which will take effect over the next four or five years, much of it concerned with GCSE and A & AS-level examinations but also changes due to government policy (and reversals of policy) about school funding, structures and governance. Uncertainty at a time of such change is very unhelpful.

Appointment of a new Headteacher

In October 2016 Mr Pearman informed governors of his intention to retire in August 2017 by which time he would have completed 13 years in post. Governors immediately set about recruiting a successor and were very pleased with a very strong national field of applicants. Following an exhaustive programme of interviews governors appointed **Mr Jonathan Webb** to succeed Mr Pearman as from 1 September 2017.

A graduate in history from Christ's College, Cambridge, Mr Webb held the position of Academic Deputy Head at Durham School at the time of his appointment, having also taught at Pocklington School, where he was Head of History and Director of Teaching & Learning, Manchester Grammar School and at Giggleswick School. He lives locally to Ripon and is married with two young sons. Governors have no doubt that RGS will progress very strongly under Mr Webb's leadership and that he will build on the outstanding success that the school has achieved under Mr Pearman's headship.

Ofsted Boarding Inspection

The intensive triennial **Ofsted Boarding Inspection** took place in May 2017 over a period of three days. Required standards are rightly very demanding to ensure that boarding students are provided with first-class care. The inspection régime looks at many aspects of boarding largely under the three headings:

- **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people**
- **How well children and young people are helped and protected**
- **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

RGS boarding was judged to be **outstanding** in each of these three categories and thus the overall judgement was **outstanding**. Governors would like to congratulate the Headmaster, Miss Murray, our Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for boarding, and all the boarding staff on achieving such an excellent outcome.

Academic results

Governors were again very pleased with the excellent academic results in public examinations, with 100% pass rate at A-level of which 79% of grades were at A*- B. At AS-level 66% of all grades were at A-B with a very high (97.9%) pass rate (A-E). Similarly the school achieved excellent GCSE results with 64% of grades at A*/A in a year when the percentages of top grades nationally were reduced yet again. All students achieved at least five A*-C grades including English and mathematics.

It is worth commenting in a little more detail in this report on the changes that have taken place in public examinations. Since 2000, A-levels have been modular courses taken over a two year period with opportunity to re-sit modules that were completed as part of the course, before a final A-level grade was awarded. Since 2015 A-level syllabuses in 13 of the most popular subjects have reverted to being linear with examinations taken at the end of the two year course. This year saw the first results of these new linear A-levels. The informed view was that these new exams would be harder than the previous modular A-levels and schools were warned to expect worse grades. In the event RGS A-level results reached record levels at %A* (23.0%) and A*/A (55.6%) with 52 students (38.0% of the total) achieving 3 grade As or better.

The removal of modularity in A and AS-level exams also involved decoupling AS-levels from A-levels so that AS-levels have become stand-alone qualifications of a standard that is intermediate between GCSE and A-level. Many schools have therefore ceased to enter their students for AS-levels, the result being a decrease of around 40% in the overall AS-level entry nationally. Governors and the Headmaster will consider carefully whether to continue entering RGS students for AS-levels examinations. We shall continue doing so for the present time not least because feedback from this year's A-level students is that they welcomed the opportunity to do AS-level exams (in 2016) but it will be kept under regular review.

In 2017 GCSE examinations saw the first year of major change in syllabus and examination reform and in grading structure in the core subjects of English, English literature and mathematics. This is explained in more detail below the results table.

Governors always conduct a detailed review of results and work with the school's leadership team to develop strategies for dealing with any identified areas of underachievement. The information below summarises the headline data for the current and previous years. Detailed information by subject is available on the school website. These excellent results again confirm Ripon Grammar School as one of the leading maintained schools in the country and compare very favourably with the major independent schools in North Yorkshire and the North of England.

Governors would emphasise strongly that high achievement in public examinations is only one aspect of the wide education that RGS is committed to. The website provides regular updates of activities and achievements in a whole range of other areas such as sport, music and the arts, all of which contribute to the all-round education the school provides.

		2017‡	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
A-level	Pass rate (A*-E)	100%	100%	99.7%	100%	100%	98.9%
	Grades A* A & B	78.9%	76.2%	71.5%	75.9%	79.2%	74.0%
	Grade A*	23.0%	20.5%	16.4%	20.8%	17.7%	14.5%
AS-level	Pass rate (A-E)	97.9%	98.8%	98.1%	94.5%	97.1%	94.9%
	Grades A & B	66.0%	64.4%	60.7%	58.3%	63.9%	63.4%
GCSE^φ	Pass rate (A*-C)	98.4%	97.4%	96.9%	98.2%	97.9%	98.5%
	Grades A* & A	63.8%	60.7%	63.0%	68.5%	62.4%	67.3%

‡ 2017 results are provisional at the time of writing this report

φ In 2017 revised grading on a 9 to 1 scale (where 9 is the highest and 1 is the lowest) was introduced in England for GCSE English, English literature and mathematics. At the same time the syllabuses and examinations for these subjects were made more demanding. Whilst the general intention was to align grades 9, 8 & 7 with the former A*/A grades, and a grade 4 and above to be the equivalent of grades C and above, the regulator's (Ofqual) advice is that the 2017 results in these subjects should not be compared to those of previous years. Since they are core subjects with almost universal entry, they will also affect a school's overall grade profile, hence overall grades should not be compared between 2017 and previous years. However, to maintain some semblance of comparability, albeit with the caveat above, numerical grades in these three subjects have been translated into letter grades but these results should therefore be understood in that context. The profile of actual grades for these subjects was

English	cumulative % grades 7, 8 & 9 = 56.2%	cumulative % of grades 4 – 9 = 100%
English literature	cumulative % grades 7, 8 & 9 = 55.0%	cumulative % of grades 4 – 9 = 99.2%
mathematics	cumulative % grades 7, 8 & 9 = 69.2%	cumulative % of grades 4 – 9 = 100%

Destination of leavers

RGS students are rightly ambitious in their career aspirations with the majority of the Upper Sixth Form applying for university, others taking up prestigious apprenticeships, going directly into employment or taking a planned gap year. Whatever their intentions students are given full support and expert guidance from sixth form tutors and careers staff so they can make fully informed decisions. The school is not narrow in its careers advice; the aim is to encourage all students to be appropriately ambitious and to support them in achieving their ambitions whatever they may be.

Although the large majority of U6 students do apply and go straight on to university an increasing number are choosing to take a year out either on a planned gap year or to re-think their choice of course. Thus, of this year's 138 UCAS applicants, 17 (12%) had taken a year out since taking their A-levels in 2016.

Most students (105 out the 138 applicants) achieved entry to their first choice university reflecting their careful and well-prepared applications and the academic standards that RGS students reach. The range of courses they applied for is large and varied, from the traditional subjects in the

sciences, languages and humanities, to the fast developing subject areas such as Games Computing and Multimedia Journalism. Of those applying for medicine, all eight who held offers successfully achieved their medical places. All five applicants for Veterinary Medicine achieved their first choice places as did our one applicant for dentistry.

University destinations: seventy five different universities featured among this year's students' choices with the 24 Russell Group universities representing the majority (67%) of preferred institutions. Success rate at gaining entry to these very competitive universities was 79%. Many students again selected northern universities with Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield and Durham as the favourites but universities across the whole of Britain are represented among their destinations. Five of our seven students who received offers from Oxbridge were successful, (one for Oxford and four for Cambridge).

School Admissions

The school's main points of entry for both day and boarding students are into Year 7, Year 9 and the Sixth Form (Year 12). North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) is responsible for administering admissions into **Year 7**. The governors' Admissions Committee closely monitors the NYCC entrance test arrangements to make sure potential applicants and the school are not disadvantaged in any way. Governors were satisfied the new 2015 arrangements are fair and effective.

Admission into **Year 9** is managed by the school and aims to provide additional places for able boys and girls who, for whatever reason, did not gain a place at age 11. The **application deadline is late January** with tests taken at the school in early February. This entry point proved very popular again this year.

Every year the school admits a large number of new entrants into the Sixth Form (**Year 12**) based on their achievements at GCSE. This year was no exception when 50 new students joined RGS. They quickly feel part of the school, contribute widely to various activities and achieve excellent results. They also bring a range of talents and experiences which benefit those of our own students who have been at RGS since the age of 11. The **Sixth Form Open Evening** takes place in **late January each year** with applications due by mid February.

Staffing

Governors are only too well aware that RGS's success results from the expertise, dedication and commitment of both teaching and support staff. Sincere thanks are therefore due to all staff members. Each year a number of staff leave RGS to pursue their careers in other schools, often in promoted posts, or through retirement. In addition to Mr Pearman, this year saw the departure of a small number of other members of staff each of whom has contributed strongly to RGS over their time at the school. They were: **Mrs Smith** (Houseparent in Johnson House), **Mr Hampshire** (IT Manager), **Mrs Hogan** (Higher Level Teaching Assistant), **Mr de Cono** (DT Technician), **Mr Macmillan** (Religious Studies), **Mr Duckworth** (Art), **Mrs Wilson** (Careers) and **Mrs Whitham** who retires from her post as Physics technician after 20 years service to the school. We thank them all most sincerely.

Governance

At the end of the academic year **Mrs Ruth Savage**, one of our co-opted governors, decided to step down after five years on the governing board. Her immense contribution to the work of governors and the school over this period has been appreciated by everyone, not least her energy, drive and vision in making Clocktower the quality publication that it now is. During the year we welcomed **Dr Chris Preece** as an elected parent governor; we are extremely grateful for the contribution that Chris is already making to the board. Our constitution deliberately makes provision for a large governing board, principally a mixture of elected parent and co-opted governors. Each year there are vacancies which we try to fill matched against the needs

identified from our skills audit. We would encourage all parents to consider putting themselves forward either for election as a parent governor when a vacancy arises or making their interest known to the Clerk to the Governors in an e-mail via the school office.

Development of major facilities

Following the recent major capital developments, this past year has been a period of consolidation, maintenance, and improvements. Substantial investment continues to be made in boarding with replacement of toilets in our girls' boarding house, Johnson House, new showers and the purchase of a large number of new beds in our boys' boarding house, School House. These upgrades, following the major development in 2015 in which Johnson House was extended to create state of the art 6th form girls' boarding facilities, mean that the standard of RGS boarding is surpassed by very few, if any, maintained boarding schools nationally. Major repairs to windows in the Science Building and on the School House building, both funded by NYCC, have also been long-awaited necessary improvements this year.

Committees

Accepting the limitations of a snapshot report, governors highlight the following:

Boarding

The governors' Boarding Committee meets termly, taking a close interest in all aspects of RGS boarding. The primary focus is always to ensure boarders are well cared for and are happy, safe and secure within the boarding community. Thus boarding governors regularly take meals in the boarding houses to sample the food, ensure facilities are kept to a high standard and are involved in a host of other aspects of boarding life, including appointing House prefects and staff appointments. However, the committee's remit is far wider than boarders' personal and social well-being and the committee also takes an interest, alongside the Curriculum Committee, in how boarders are achieving academically and in the wider curricular opportunities RGS provides. As part of this year's special focus a more extended report on RGS boarding appears towards the end of this report.

Curriculum

We have continued our core function of monitoring the attainment and progress of students in GCSE and A level exams and in all year groups. Frequently we are able to congratulate the school or individual departments on superb outcomes for our students which place the school comfortably in the top 1% nationally. Occasionally we have to challenge the leadership or a department about results that should have been better and ask for details of remedial action. We regularly check on the progress of each sub-group of students: boys, girls, boarders, those in receipt of Pupil Premium, those receiving learning support, etc. We are confident that the quality of education at RGS extends equally to all students. The committee reviews with the SLT the curriculum offer for all year groups and has approved a broadening of the choice of compulsory modern foreign language at GCSE. We continue to monitor the uptake of courses at GCSE and A level and the resultant set-sizes. Our aim always is to provide the widest possible choice of subjects that is affordable. Periodically we review the health & safety arrangements in subjects and this year we have focussed on Design Technology.

Admissions

The Admissions Committee is a sub-committee of the Curriculum Committee (CC) and, as such, reports to the full board via the CC.

Interest in joining the school remains very strong for our main entry points in the 1st form (Year 7), 3rd form (Year 9) and the sixth form, including boarding. Consequently, we have been able to make offers of places such that we are likely to reach our target numbers next year. This will bring us some security in times of dwindling school budgets. The committee scrutinises closely the arrangements made by NYCC for the Year 7 admissions tests and does everything possible to ensure that all in-catchment children have the opportunity to take the test. Our analysis shows that our Year 9 entry is giving a second chance to some in-catchment children and our sixth form is providing an important educational resource for a wider area of rural North Yorkshire. We are therefore confident that at all points of entry we are fulfilling an important role as a community school.

Finance & Personnel (F&P)

Careful oversight of the school's finances is one of the governors' major responsibilities and much of the detailed monitoring work is delegated to the F&P Committee. This is always important but especially so at a time of very tight government funding. Post-16 funding in particular has been frozen and this impacts significantly on RGS and other grammar schools which have a high proportion of students in the Sixth Form all following academic courses. Governors have made representations to the local MP about this.

In outline, at the end of the financial year 2016-17 the revenue deficit was -£10,024, the brought forward amount from 2015-16 was +£150,897, totalling an uncommitted balance of +£140,874.

The capital surplus for 2016-17 was +£996 combined with the brought forward surplus from 2015-16 of +£20,828, totalling an overall capital surplus of +£21,824. The school received a capital loan of £1,159,000 from North Yorkshire County Council to fund the Johnson House boarding extension which is being repaid over 13 years.

The F&P Committee also monitors staff appointments and welfare, as well as staff performance. Whilst recruitment of good staff is always a challenge, governors have been very pleased with the appointments made during the year, a reflection of the reputation of the school in attracting good applicants. RGS has a rigorous staff appraisal procedure in place, both for teaching and support staff, and governors have been especially pleased to note the very high performance of staff from these appraisals.

Pastoral

The Pastoral Committee meets termly to fulfil its overriding responsibility which is to ensure the highest standards of care and welfare of students in the school, including their safeguarding. All meetings are focused on monitoring students' well-being and the well-being of the RGS community as a whole. Thus the committee receives regular reports from senior staff but also from students about the work of the School Council and whilst the committee will receive outline reports on disciplinary issues, its focus is on ensuring that a very positive culture of behaviour and respect is evident and that all RGS students are developing as respectful, positive

and responsible young people.

Premises

Our premises manager, Mr Andrew Hogg, who took up post in April last year has made impressive inroads on creating and implementing a whole estate maintenance programme. Given the complexity of the school buildings and grounds this is a priority issue for the committee.

As mentioned above, this year has been one of consolidation but the committee continues to give a great deal of thought to the need for new dining facilities, how and when the project could be programmed and, more importantly, how it may be funded in the climate of tight public sector finances.

One issue that particularly challenged the committee this year, and indeed the full board, was the request to locate a telecoms mast on the school site. The Headmaster received a number of letters of concern from parents and from our school neighbours, including our two local primary schools. The committee considered the evidence and implications in great detail which led to a lengthy debate. The outcome was that governors decided not to agree to a telecoms mast being placed on the school site.

Publicity & Community Liaison (P&CL)

P&CL's SIP strand objectives are improving communication between the school and parents, stakeholders, alumni and the wider community. In 2017, P&CL has followed this focus but with an emphasis on prioritising the marketing of boarding and ensuring that boarding has been strongly and positively presented in external communications. Full boarding take-up is critical to the financial and wider success of the school.

The Clocktower magazine continues to be the main avenue for engagement with alumni and other stakeholders and has been used to showcase and advertise the success of RGS boarding in recent editions. Clocktower has been commended for its quality (even by interviewees!). The reputation of the magazine has now grown to the stage where it provides a vital and much-admired avenue for news of the school and former alumni. Ruth Savage continues to provide the time and expertise which underpins the production of Clocktower.

The committee continues to monitor and (to the extent required or possible) 'tweak' the refurbished school website which, like Clocktower, continues to be well-received and is particularly valued by parents as an effective means of communication concerning school matters. Twitter, and more recently Facebook, have been used to engage with the wider community and parents and the response to these enhanced social media offerings is strong and positive. Jane Redfern plays a vital role in keeping these avenues of communication current, effective and engaging.

A number of alumni reunion events have taken place over the last year and Nicky Woolfenden has arranged and managed these events very successfully. The committee continues to encourage and assist interested year groups/alumni to arrange and run reunion events.

In 2017/18, these areas will remain important and, in addition, attention

will be focussed on the Activities Fund in an effort to ensure wider support and contribution from outside. Initial signs of increased contributions to the fund are encouraging and this will hopefully be strengthened by a revised/enhanced Activities Fund leaflet which is aimed at broadening the contributor base, both amongst the parent body and more widely.

Extra-curricular

Governors are very pleased that the school offers such a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are grateful to staff who undertake these voluntarily to ensure an excellent all-round education for students. It is important all students are involved in at least one activity (most are involved in more) to ensure that each benefits from the wide range on offer and feels part of the school community. There is also an increasing number of educational visits across the UK and abroad, for example the Second year French trip to Normandy, A-level art in Paris and Cornwall and classics and geography visits to Italy.

There is always insufficient space in this short report to comment in detail on **sport, drama, music, expeditions** and the **Duke of Edinburgh award scheme**, or the growth of the much-valued **House system** and the impressive commitment of students to their **charity week**. Governors would simply refer parents to the Headmaster's termly letters for fuller information.

Special focus on RGS Boarding

Miss Murray, Deputy Head who oversees boarding in the school writes: Every year in boarding is busy and this year has been busier and more productive than ever. At the start of the year we had more than 80 students in residence, our highest number of boarders in some years; from September 2017 this will rise to over 90. In addition to students who live in the Yorkshire region, we were joined by students from Nigeria, the Caribbean and the Middle East. The boarding houses continue to offer a safe, secure and comfortable environment in which students can thrive. Three new members of staff joined the boarding team: Mrs Sanderson, Miss Hutchinson and Mr Astley and quickly became established in their new roles bringing new ideas to the boarding community.

The first term was a flurry of activity as boarders participated in a weekend team building activity at Camphill organised by Mr Fearnley, days out to Tropical World, Leeds City Centre, Stump Cross Caverns and the Billy Bob's American Diner, a particular favourite of the boys and girls. The boarders also attended a boarding marketing event held at the Pavilions Harrogate and conducted themselves with aplomb, promoting boarding at Ripon Grammar School. The boarding students have a strong sense of pride in Ripon Grammar School and are a credit to the school.

Applications for boarding places at RGS continue to grow and I anticipate that in September 2017, both the boarding houses will be nearing full capacity, given those holding offers make the grade. Email enquiries regarding the availability of boarding places flow in from all over the UK and internationally.

This year we have focused on the role of the houseparent in supporting the academic and personal progress of boarders. The houseparents act as personal tutor to small groups of the boarding students and this one-to-one support and pastoral care, enables boarders to fully engage in their learning and life at the school. Each child is encouraged to discover what motivates them, whether it is sport, music or artistic pursuits. Every child's academic progress is carefully monitored and excellent communication between the boarding staff and day school ensures all boarding students are supported. A striking feature of boarding is the peer to peer support that is available and the opportunity for students to learn from their peers in

addition to the superb support from the teaching staff who work as houseparents. The boarding staff are always available to provide advice, support and care for the students at all times and know each child as an individual, as would a parent. We are fortunate in having such a well-qualified, motivated and dedicated team of houseparents.

The fabric of the boarding accommodation continues to improve with input from boarding students as to what they believe should be prioritised. Bathrooms and showers in both the boarding houses have been refurbished, the junior corridor in the boys' house is to have new beds and the public areas in Johnson House have been redecorated and staircases carpeted.

The sixth form students have drawn up a constitution for a boarders' council and the newly appointed house prefects will continue to develop 'Student Voice' in boarding. The students value the opportunity to feedback on life in boarding and prioritise and contribute to future developments.

Since joining RGS in September 2004 I have been party to five boarding inspections, each under new guidelines and frameworks and the most recent inspection was no different. The Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) came into force on 1st April 2017, and I believe Ripon Grammar School was the first state boarding school in England, to be inspected under the new framework. The inspection took place on Monday 15th May and concluded on Wednesday 17th May. Of the three categories reported on, all were graded 'outstanding'. 'How well children and young people are helped and protected' and 'Effectiveness of leaders and managers' were both graded outstanding. The overarching judgement 'Overall experiences and progress of children and young people' was also graded outstanding. This is the first time in the Ripon Grammar School's history that boarding has been graded outstanding. The Ofsted team reported:

"there is a strong boarding community that supports boarders to realise their full potential and provides them with a good springboard to the next step in life. Boarders experience significant benefits to their independence, confidence, self-discipline, and personal and academic achievements. The school environment is welcoming and friendly. Boarders make strong and lasting friendships. They enjoy a wide range of leisure activities. Boarders' behaviour is excellent and they are a credit to themselves and the school. Leaders manage very well helping boarders to enjoy their time and develop their talents. Senior staff ensure that the boarders' individual needs are prioritised. There is excellent coordination between boarding staff, teachers and support staff responsible for health and special needs".

A summary of the report available from the school's website from which the full report can also be downloaded:

<http://www.ripongrammar.co.uk/boarding/ofsted-boarding-report-summary/>

Now we have an outstanding day school and outstanding boarding provision, a testimony to our retiring headmaster, Mr Pearman's commitment throughout his thirteen years at Ripon Grammar School. Boarding in every boarding school never reaches perfection and we will continue to monitor, evaluate and review boarding provision from the perspective of each individual child. We endeavour to ensure that every boarder has a positive, fulfilling experience and is well supported in achieving their goals.

Communication with Parents

The school website is very popular, both from a marketing perspective and as a means of communicating with parents. All letters which are sent home are hosted on the website as a

matter of course. We would therefore ask parents to check the website on a regular basis to ensure they are always fully informed. Similarly the texting system is proving popular with parents and will continue to be used for urgent matters only.

Routinely, e-mail communication is being used, hence the importance of parents ensuring the school has an up to date e-mail address. Many parents follow the school's achievements via Twitter and the RGS News is published three times a year, updating parents and students on the activities taking place within school. The Headmaster also writes a newsletter twice a term to ensure that events of consequence are conveyed to parents. We therefore hope parents feel fully informed about all aspects of school life but **do please** let us know if that is not the case.

In conclusion governors are very pleased to report another extremely successful year for Ripon Grammar School and warmly thank all staff for their commitment and professionalism, and all parents for their continued support of the school. But our last words of thanks must go to Mr Pearman who, after 13 years of exemplary Headship at RGS, leaves the school with an outstanding reputation as one of the leading schools in the north of England.

Dr Peter Mason

Chair of Governors

September 2017