



Re-founded 1555

Ripon Grammar School

Helping shape the future since 1555



From the Headmaster

18 December, 2015

Dear Parents

End of Autumn term Newsletter

I hope this newsletter finds you well and that you are looking forward to the forthcoming festivities. This letter accompanies the **RGS News**, which is full of information and stories about the students, who have been extremely busy this term. I am sure you will note that they have achieved an enormous amount in a relatively short period of time. I am very grateful to my secretary, Mrs Hargraves, and to the editorial team of students who have worked so hard to produce this edition; I hope you will enjoy reading it. However, there is also a lot of other activity which has been going on, about which I thought it might be useful to keep you informed via this letter.

The **Sunday Times 'Parent Power'** series noted that RGS was, for the third year in succession, the highest attaining school at GCSE and A level in Yorkshire and the North East, which is a tremendous achievement and of which both staff and students should be very proud. It is testament to the tremendous work ethic that is evident in the students here.

We are also in the season of **University applications** and I am pleased that nearly all the UCAS applications have now been sent. I know that many students have received offers already, which is extremely encouraging. The Oxbridge season is upon us and twenty students have gained interviews at Oxford and Cambridge, with approximately equal numbers at both. The results of these will be with us in the New Year. The careers department is also supporting students who are seeking apprenticeships or paid employment.

I am delighted that, following the work by Mrs Keelan-Edwards and Mr Bruce, Ripon Grammar School has been chosen as a **Holocaust Beacon School** which will mean that it will become a school of excellence in the area for the teaching of this very important part of history. This will involve working with other schools collaboratively and, as a consequence, students at RGS studying history will undoubtedly benefit. One of the major events happening next term is a visit by a Holocaust survivor, which I am sure will be inspiring.

There has been much progress on the proposed **3G pitch**, which will be sited on the fields at RGS. This is being fully funded by Persimmon Homes, who are hoping to gain planning consent for houses to be built on the old Cathedral Choir school site in Whitcliffe Lane. As a consequence, they have to fund a sporting facility in the city and negotiations are well advanced for a fully flood-lit 3G pitch to be created at RGS. This will be for community use, as well as for the use of students here. It will be suitable for rugby, up to the age of 16, as well as for football and it will be a tremendous asset. Planning permission is expected to be made before Christmas and we will have to wait and see how this progresses over the next few months.

Mr Garvey is retiring from his role as head of boys' PE after nearly 32 years of sterling service. He will, however, continue with his Classics teaching commitment until the end of the academic year. Mr Bessey will cover Mr Garvey's PE lessons until the end of the summer term and we will be advertising for a teacher of boys' PE early in the new year.

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Mrs Morrell, our current school nurse, has resigned from her role here due to family commitments. We are now looking to increase **medical cover** in the school by appointing a full-time, or two part-time, school health workers. This post is currently advertised on the school website if you are interested in applying, or if you know someone who is. Details have also been sent to all parents by email for information.

Good luck to the 2015-16 **Engineering Education Scheme** who have begun work on their project to improve safety at over 6,000 railway crossings, are working in conjunction with Siemens, Network Rail and the University of Lancaster. The team consists of Patrick Moon, Jonathan Tanner, Alec Cavell-Taylor and John Ashton. We look forward to hearing about their progress over the coming months.

Jonathan Tanner, Ryan Wood, Kieran Woodcock and Lorna Aspinall went with Miss Heslop to represent the school in the **UKMT senior team Maths Challenge** at Teesside University. Overall our team came third out of twenty-one teams; a super achievement.

A new **merit scheme** has been launched in the lower school, whereby students have been issued with cards to record their merits throughout the year, which are kept in their planners. There are bronze, silver and gold cards. To obtain the bronze merit award students must collect a total of fifteen merits and fill their bronze card. This is then exchanged for the silver card where the students must obtain a further fifteen merits to obtain the silver award, and exchange for the gold card. To obtain the gold merit award requires a total of forty-five merits. Merits are given to students by staff for a number of reasons including outstanding work, effort and general kindness shown around school.

Our students continue to succeed at sport, and in **hockey** the U16 girls' team reached the North of England finals where they competed extremely well against a very high standard of opposition. They defeated Wakefield High but unfortunately failed to qualify for the next round by goal difference. The under 18 mixed hockey team enjoyed a superb 6 – 1 win against Queen Elizabeth's at Darlington, and the U12 and 13 hockey teams reached the North Yorkshire finals of the In2Hockey national tournament, played at St Peter's, York. The U12s finished third and the U13s finished fourth.

Congratulations to the U16 team who represented Harrogate and Craven in the Inter Area Cluster **netball** tournament, beating York and Selby 27 – 14, and to the U12 netball team who won their Harrogate and Craven area tournament also.

The KS4 girls' and boys' **badminton** teams are Harrogate and Craven champions and will be representing the area in the next round in North Yorkshire to be held in February.

The **girls' swimming** team is enjoying great success, having defeated Queen Margaret's and Harrogate Grammar School in recent matches.

Well done to the **U16 football** team who progress to the quarter final of the County cup after beating Thirsk 1 – 0.

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The First XV **rugby** team beat Ermysted's in the Yorkshire Cup by 24 – 12 and progress to the next round which is against Thomas Rotherham College. They also beat Harrogate Grammar School 10 – 5 in the Nat West Vase 4th round and now progress to the next round in this competition.

The **ESU Mace** is the largest and most prestigious debating competition for secondary school pupils in the UK. Motions are given out two weeks in advance and the RGS team of Hugh Whitworth and Gus Smith were superb on the topic of 'diversity quotas in the BBC' in the debates, hosted at RGS for the first time. We look forward to the next round as one of the three teams selected as joint winners.

Katy Richardson and Felicity Garth are winners of the **regional modern foreign languages debating competition**, defeating St Peter's School, York in the final in a Spanish debate.

The wide range of activities which students gain so much from, such as sport, drama, music, the House competitions and the staging of this week's Carol Service are all funded through the **Activities Fund**. Without the generosity of parents who fund transport for sports fixtures, staging costumes for plays etc, these would not be possible. A leaflet explaining the Activities Fund can be downloaded from the school website and the email version of this letter includes a link to this,

<http://www.ripongrammar.co.uk/documents/Activities%20Fund%20Leaflet.pdf>

If you can give a monthly donation of whatever you can afford, it would be very welcome and would help RGS maintain its outstanding curricular programme. I am very grateful to those parents who already donate, which makes a real difference, but it would be excellent if more parents could give. I know the students would be very grateful.

Due to the increase in size of the school, space for storing **students' personal belongings**, such as coats and PE kit, is at a premium. I would encourage students to always take property home when it is not needed for a particular day, rather than leaving it in a cloakroom for an extended period of time. In any event, labelling of all items brought into school is essential so that property which has been found can be returned to its rightful owner, including larger items such as coats. It would be very helpful if this be done for the beginning of next term.

May I take this opportunity to clarify the arrangements should we need to **close the school at short notice due to heavy snow**. We shall send a text message to all parents to advise them that the school will be closed for that day. It is therefore most important that we have an up to date mobile telephone number for you. We shall aim to do this by 7.45am, but there may be circumstances which make this difficult to guarantee. Nonetheless, this is my intention. We shall also put a note on the school website and I shall contact four local radio stations, ie BBC Radio York, BBC Tees, Minster FM and Stray FM. Please note that I shall monitor the weather situation daily and repeat the process each morning, if necessary, if the school remains closed. **I will not contact you if the school is open, so if you hear nothing please assume school is open.**

The **Sixth form Open Evening is on Monday, 25 January**, starting at 6.30pm and the testing for **Year 9 students, takes place on Saturday morning, 6 February**, for which there are thirteen places available in September 2016 (for nine day students and four boarders). Both these events are very important in terms of potential recruitment and I hope that you will make those who may be interested in applying for a place aware of these.

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I hope that you were able to attend the **Christmas concert** in school and/or the **Carol Service** in the Cathedral, which were wonderful occasions. Our thanks go to Mr Seymour, Mrs Morpeth, Ms Stables and Mr Clifford, and to Mrs Owens and all the musicians.

With very best wishes for Christmas and for the New Year.

Yours sincerely

M L Pearman
Headmaster

Forthcoming events – Spring half term 2016

Monday, 4 January	School closed for staff training
Tuesday, 5 January	School opens for Spring term
Tuesday, 5 Jan – Tuesday, 12 Jan	Fifth year mocks
Thursday, 7 Jan – Monday, 11 Jan	Upper Sixth trip to Berlin
Wednesday, 13 Jan – Friday, 15 Jan	Lower Sixth mocks
Monday, 25 January	Sixth form Open Evening 6.30pm
Thursday, 4 February	Third year Information Evening 5.30pm
Saturday, 6 February	Current third year entrance tests
Wednesday, 10 February	Fifth year Art trip – destination tbc
Thursday, 11 February	Fourth year Parents' Evening 4.30 – 7pm
Friday, 12 February	End of half term – school closes at 3.55pm
Monday, 15 Feb – Friday, 19 Feb	Ski trip
Monday, 22 February	School opens after half term holiday.

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