

Date: 12 February, 2016

From: The Headmaster

Dear Parents/Guardians

SPRING HALF TERM NEWSLETTER 2016

I trust this letter finds you well. I am just writing to give you a brief update on some news and events during the first half term, and we are already looking forward to a very busy second half of the Spring term in the run-up to Easter.

The first half term has been exceptionally busy with **mock exams** for the fifth and lower sixth forms, all of which have been marked. The upper sixth have their mocks as soon as we return from the half term break and the aim then is to get reports out as soon as possible to provide some guidance, advice and encouragement for the students as they prepare for GCSE, AS and A2 exams in the summer. We have also had a number of parents' evenings as well as making a number of staff appointments.

With regard to **staffing**, I am delighted that Mr Highton has been appointed to an established post in the chemistry department at RGS; he will continue in his role until the end of this academic year when he assumes his permanent post here. Mr Dunmore, our premises manager, has resigned and we are currently advertising for his replacement. The details of this post are on the school website should you know of anyone who may be interested in applying. We are also seeking a full-time teacher of boys' PE, following Mr Garvey's retirement, and this has attracted a very strong field. I will inform you of the appointment as soon as possible. Mr Willis is retiring from his post as teaching assistant and badminton coach at the end of term; his hours will be covered by existing staff. Mrs Morrell, our school health worker, has now left and Ms Garner, who is a qualified nurse, has been appointed to the rôle after half term.

The Sixth Form Open Evening was extremely busy and I hope that we will be able to recruit well into the lower sixth for September 2016. There was also a very significant interest in boarding and I would expect next year's lower sixth to be in the region of around 145 students.

The third form entrance tests were held last Saturday morning and over twenty students were tested. Thirteen places are available in September and we await the result of testing.

The UCAS process is nearly complete and I am very pleased with the outcome. Many students have been successful in securing places at Russell Group universities on competitive courses, including medicine, veterinary science and law. Popular universities this year include Durham, Imperial College London, Edinburgh, Bristol, Newcastle and Manchester. Warwick has also been popular this year. I was pleased that seven students secured places from Oxford and Cambridge and also very pleased

that two students have obtained impressive apprentice opportunities, one with the American multinational company IBM and Capgemini, and one with a local firm of accountants in Bedale, Kenneth Easby Limited. The challenge now is to secure the necessary grades to be successful in accessing first-choice courses.

A level music student, Alexandra Elvidge, appeared as a guest **soloist for Richmondshire Choral Society's** performance of Bach's 'Magnificat'. Alexandra has just received a place as a first study singer at the prestigious Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

In December, **the sixth form raised £855 for the Moorfields Eye Charity**. This charity supports the incredible and pioneering work of Moorfields Eye Hospital, making a difference for people with sight problems. The charity was brought to their attention in the emotional speech by David Owens, at their vote for Charity Week last year, and he has been supported by them. The Moorfields Eye Charity was narrowly outvoted by only four votes by the Yorkshire Air Ambulance but, as a sixth form, they wanted to do something to show their support for the charity, and David, and they plan to carry on raising more money this year.

Further monies have also been **raised for Yorkshire Air Ambulance**, the charity chosen for Charity Week last year. The total now stands at £10, 584.68p, a tremendous achievement by the students.

This is also the time of year when we are looking to appoint **future school officers** and that process will take place after half term. Everyone who applies for the post of Head Boy, deputy Head Boy, Head Girl, deputy Head Girl or prefect will be interviewed. The announcement of those who have been successful will be made early in the Summer term. There is always a lot of interest in these posts and I have no doubt that it will be, once again, a very difficult decision.

At the end of this term **the doors at both ends of the North corridor**, which includes the Clocktower entrance, will be replaced. The doors to be installed will be automatic-opening and they will have an access arrangement on them to enable wheelchair access as well as ensuring that there is a security system on both doors. The work will commence in the last week of term and will take something in the region of four weeks to complete, so should be ready at the end of the Easter holiday. The North corridor and Clocktower entrance will be re-painted and re-carpeted to improve the environment.

Progress regarding the **3G pitch** is still on course and clearly the project is dependant on Persimmon Homes securing planning permission for the development of the old Cathedral Choir School site on Whitcliffe Lane. In the meantime, planning permission will also be submitted for the development of the 3G pitch on our school site. I will keep you informed as to how this develops as I receive news.

All our A-level maths students have participated in the **Senior UK Mathematics Challenge**. There were some excellent performances and the following students received Gold certificates, indicating that they were amongst the top 10% nationally. These students were Tom Hooper and Jonathan Tanner (also Best in Year) from the lower sixth, and Elleonor Lamb, Max Vesty, James Donaldson, Ben Pease, Yaz Ebert, Callum Richardson and Kieran Woodcock (also Best in Year and Best in School) from the upper sixth. Kieran has also been awarded a Certificate of Distinction in Round One of the British Mathematical Olympiad. This was in the follow-on round for the Senior Maths Challenge and only the top 25% of participants receive a Certificate of Distinction.

Thomas Whitelegg, in the first form, was named as one of the regional finalists in the **Royal Mail's Young Letter Writer of the Year competition**. Thomas's entry, on the theme of "What is your dream job?", has now been shortlisted to go through to the next stage of the competition. He has won £40 in vouchers for himself and £40 for the school.

The English department have had a very busy half term with teams competing in the second round of the **English Speaking Union's debating Mace in Leeds** where they narrowly missed a place in the regional final, and also competing in the first round of the **ESU public speaking competition in Wakefield** where they came a very close third.

RGS was once again invited to send teams to the annual **Design Technology competition** held at St Aidan's School and run by the local Rotary clubs for the local schools. Our sixth form team won the 'Best Portfolio' and the silver award for 'Best Overall' in their category. Our intermediate team won the gold award for 'Best Overall' in their category and our foundation team also won the gold award for 'Best Overall' in their category. Two gold awards and one silver across three competitions was an exceptional performance from the teams.

The teams were: Advanced (sixth form): Tom Dale, John Ashton, Rebecca Kent and Saoirse Ramsey. Intermediate (fifth form): Annissa Cook, Molly Morrell, Oliver Bowett and Oliver Butler. Foundation (third form): Evie Hoskison, Alia Moon, Eliot Hutchinson and Sam Maddison.

Imogen Vollans, also in the first form, recently came fifth in the **Yorkshire Double Mini Trampoline championships** and seventh in the Yorkshire Trampolining championships, as well as coming twelfth in the Yorkshire swimming championships (100m backstroke) in her age group.

Fourteen RGS students recently ran for Harrogate and Craven in the **North Yorkshire School Cross Country**. Toby Osman led the way from start to finish to be crowned County Champion. Toby will now represent the County at the English School Championships, where he will be joined by Anika Schwarze-Chintapatla, Ella Foster and Laura Bosomworth.

Three rugby teams, the U18s, U16s and U15s are all in the semi-finals of the Yorkshire Cup. The U16s have qualified for the finals whilst the U18s lost in a close match against Prince Henry's. The U15s are due to play their match after half term. The U18 Sevens team will be participating in the Durham School Sevens and the Austin Friars Sevens tournaments shortly. The **first XI football team** also reached the quarter finals of the County Cup.

The following students have been selected to play for North Yorkshire in **hockey**: Amelia Borchard, Georgie Turner, Rosie Barker, Kathryn Barrett, Millie Simenacz, Libby Rickard, Maisie Heap, Olivia Borchard, Penny Baker, Henry Hanson, Poppy Lawson and Georgie Borchard. Jacob Stamp and Angus Ison have both been selected to play for Durham County JAC. They play for Thirsk Hockey Club U14's currently.

The Careers and Higher Education Evening is being held on **Wednesday, 9 March** from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. Students from all year groups, together with their parents, are invited to attend this event, which, from this year, will be held annually on a themed basis. We do hope that you will come along to meet with representatives from about sixty organisations, companies and higher education institutions and to hear about opportunities for careers within the Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Sport sectors. Many of the organisations offer training schemes and apprenticeships, and will be able to offer advice about the increasing number of alternative routes available, both for post-16 and post-18

employment and study. The participating universities and colleges will additionally be able to advise students about study across all subject areas.

This is always a very popular event and a tremendous opportunity, not only for students to gain ideas and inspiration for the future, but also to ask advice about the sort of things they can be doing to help equip them for future careers and university courses. Further details will be sent out after half term and we look forward to welcoming you to the evening.

Students who are participating in the **World Challenge trip** to Malaysia and Borneo in July this year are busy making preparations and their next, key meeting is to be held on **Thursday, 10 March from 4pm – 7pm in school. Guardians are invited to attend from 6pm – 7pm.** It is compulsory for all team members to attend this meeting so please make a note of it.

Our school **musical this year is 'Anything Goes'** with performances on **17, 18 and 19 March.** Tickets will be on sale after half term. A letter with full details accompanies this newsletter and is also on the school website. Meanwhile, regular rehearsals still continue; the choirs, bands and ensembles are preparing for the summer concert, the Harrogate Competitive Festival, the Ripon Cathedral Festival and the Northern Aldborough Festival.

An Oxbridge Information Evening is to be held on **Wednesday, 23 March** at St Aidan's school, Harrogate from 6pm – 8pm. This is a joint event that is hosted on alternative years between our two schools. This is aimed at lower sixth form students who may be considering applying to Oxford or Cambridge and a letter with full details has been sent out by Mr Fell, Head of Sixth Form. It is also on the school website for information.

In the meantime, our **annual ski trip departs** on Saturday and I hope they will have very enjoyable time in Austria.

With very best wishes for an enjoyable break over half term.

Yours sincerely



M L Pearman
Headmaster