



## GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS: 2020-2021

### Introduction

I started the report of 2019-2020 citing 'the last academic year as one of unprecedented challenge'. This year we have continued to live through the pandemic. The school has rigidly adhered to the guidance issued to it and done everything within its power to keep business as usual. Online learning and MS Teams are now part of our universal language - parents have been trained in its use and our students are more digitally literate than ever before. The period of school closure during the spring term was yet again a difficult period for every member of the school community; but the unanimous feedback from parents and students has been of the consistent high quality of educational provision - not just the academic curriculum but also the attention paid to the pastoral care and wellbeing of our students. This continued through the rest of the academic year as students were required to isolate at home after potential contact with the virus. We are under no illusion as to the disruptive nature of this for all our students.

Staff and students have engaged with the guidelines put in place - to ensure the risks to our community have been kept as low as possible. This has been difficult. Year group bubbles, split lunches, one way systems and lateral flow testing, as just some examples, have become a familiar part of school life.

I would therefore again like to start this report by, on behalf of the governors, thanking every member of the Ripon Grammar School staff team for the dedication and commitment they demonstrated throughout the year. I also again pay tribute to the resilience, diligence and motivation demonstrated by students, who have worked so incredibly hard during these times of great adversity. The cancellation again of the public examinations, and the disruption of the usual school learning environment has brought with it unimaginable stress and uncertainty, and as governors we appreciate the support given by parents too.

The announcement of the cancellation again of the public examinations for summer 2021 was followed by a very careful and rigorous process to ensure our students were appropriately assessed, and allocated teacher assessed grades that were ambitious but fair. We are grateful to the entire staff team for the commitment and dedication they, without exception, devoted to this process to ensure all students achieved the best possible, but fair grades, based on the assessment of their performance and progress.

Despite the fact that many of our enriching co-curricular activities have been curtailed, the monthly editions of RGS News have kept us all up to date with what has been going on and the many tremendous things our students continue to achieve. Governors were delighted to learn that, despite all that was going on, all students were able to be served a Christmas Lunch. Our usual wonderful Carol Service in Ripon Cathedral was not able to take place but, instead, a virtual Christmas Carol Concert which was recorded in Holy Trinity Church, which was available for us all to view online. Sadly, school trips have been cancelled - and the World Challenge Expedition was also postponed again. However, as restrictions have been eased we look forward to hearing of our school life returning to a more normal situation and we hope very much that students will once again be able to benefit from the vast educational offering RGS continues to provide.

Governors are acutely aware of the challenges the last 2 years have posed on everyone. We appreciate how difficult life has been. We know that teaching and learning via online platforms is exhausting. This year governors will continue to focus on the safety and wellbeing of every member of our community. We are grateful to the support from parents.

School welcomes communication from parents and I would urge you to proactively contact the school if you have any concerns. The partnership between home and school has never been more important. Governors were delighted to meet with Year 9 parents during the summer term to hear of their experiences of the school. We were pleased to hear that school was responsive to communications raised and all expressed their satisfaction with the pastoral care of their children in school.

Governors have a role to ensure the wellbeing of the staff in school. Without a healthy staff team then how can we maintain the outstanding educational offering we aspire to? With this in mind, I would ask parents to ensure that when communicating with the school they do so in a respectful and non-aggressive manner. Governors have zero tolerance of any form of aggression towards the staff team.

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.

### **Governors' Role**

The full governing board (FGB) meets four times each year but governors discharge their responsibilities largely via their committees: Admissions, Boarding, Curriculum, Finance and Personnel, Pastoral and Premises. 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 the staff team. The committees regularly scrutinise the 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 participating in the formulation of the Strategic Development Plan in discussion with the Headmaster and the staff.

Governors are also charged with keeping abreast of changes in education nationally and the past year has seen the continuation of an enormous array of changes which will continue to take effect over the next few years, much of it concerned with public examinations, but also changes in how schools are inspected and assessed and important updates and developments to enhance child protection and safeguarding.

Governors are accountable to the role they undertake. Attendance at meetings is recorded, and publicly available on the school website. Since 23 March 2020, when the full impact of the Covid- 19 pandemic became apparent, governors have continued to meet both as a full governing board and as sub-committees virtually, and business has continued. We are looking forward to resuming face to face meetings in the coming year.

### **Safeguarding**

During the summer term we were pleased to welcome members of NYCC into school for a safeguarding review. The safety and wellbeing of students and staff is our absolute priority. The review involved staff, students and governors. The report was highly complimentary of the wellbeing and safety of our students and those involved in the review noted the compassion and dedication to wellbeing throughout.

Parents may not be surprised to hear that the review highlighted some areas for improvement, particularly regarding our site security. The feedback has been welcomed. Safeguarding continues to be prioritised within our Strategic Development Plan, and governors will ensure that this vital aspect of school life underpins the work of the Board. The majority of improvements suggested have been implemented, with clear plans to achieve the remainder.

## Public examination results

As a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, public examinations were cancelled this year. For both A levels and GCSEs, students were awarded grades based on 'Teacher Assessed Grades' - awarded by the school based on the attainment and progress through the course period. For Ripon Grammar School, the grades submitted were based on careful evaluation of individual students' progress and performance in assessments. The grades were carefully analysed, internally moderated and scrutinised by the teaching and leadership teams. Governors were confident that this was done with exceptional care and that the grades submitted were as accurate as possible. Governors are extremely pleased with the superb academic results at both A level and GCSE. The 2021 A level results were excellent, in keeping with previous years with a near 100% pass rate (A\* - E). A phenomenal 81% of grades were A\* - B with 61% of grades being A\* or A. Out of our 144 students, there were 133 A\* grades, and 22 students gained three or more A\* grades, which is exceptional.

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) continues to be highly valued by universities. This year 56 students completed the EPQ which involves students undertaking a piece of research of their choosing, followed by a report or essay of up to 5000 words. Graded on A\*-E scale 88% of the RGS students who completed an EPQ secured an A\*-B grade, with 73.2% achieving the A\*/A grade. The performance of RGS students in this challenging assessment continues to be outstanding.

The grading system for the GCSE examinations where the grading follows a grade 9-1 structure is now well established. In this system, grades 9-7 are equivalent to the previous A\*/A and grades 9-4 to A\*-C. These boundaries, accepted by Ofqual, the government's examinations regulator, provide a tool to enable some year on year data comparisons to be made.

RGS GCSE results compared extremely favourably to national results. This year, 97.2% of our students achieved grades 9-5, and 72.4% of grades were 9-7.

These excellent GCSE, AS & A-level results again place RGS as one of the highest achieving schools, both maintained and independent, in the North of England, although the DfE has not published comparison data between different schools because of the change in the format of the assessments this year.

The information below summarises the headline data for the current and previous years. Detailed information by subject is available on the school website. Governors would emphasise strongly that high achievement in public examinations is only one aspect of the wide education that the school provides. RGS values all its students as individuals, irrespective of their ability, and strives to support everyone to achieve their maximum potential, through a love of learning. All achievements, not just those of the most able, are celebrated. Governors are also acutely aware that, from time to time, students will face considerable health, family or personal difficulties. The impact of these cannot be overestimated, and the school remains utterly committed to work with parents and others to strongly support students through their education so that they can achieve their best with the highest amount of pastoral support.

Governors look at progress measures to assess how groups of students have progressed during their time at RGS based on exam data on entry and at GCSE. Progress 8 at GCSE, determined by the DfE for the full national cohort is one such measure. As a result of the exam cancellation in 2019 and 2020, the government announced that it would not publish school or college level results data in autumn 2020 or autumn 2021 for comparison. Nevertheless, data from the RGS 2020 candidates' GCSE results show a Progress 8 measure of +0.78. This means that, on average, RGS students achieved more than three quarters of one grade better across all subjects than expected from a national comparison.

		2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
A-level	Pass rate (A*-E)	99.8%	100%	98.9%	99.8%	100%	100%	99.7%	100%
	Grades A*A & B	81.0%	82.7%	76.1%	79.7%	79.1%	76.2%	71.5%	75.9%
	Grade A*	28.1%	29.1%	20.4%	19.4%	23.0%	20.5%	16.4%	20.8%
GCSE	Grades 9 - 4	99.6%	99.6%	96.9%	97.0%	98.5%	97.4%	96.9%	98.2%
GCSE	Grades 9 – 7	72.4%	67.7%	61.6%	65.8%	64.4%	60.7%	63.0%	68.5%

2021 Results are provisional until all appeals have been completed.

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, followed by a further 20 subjects in 2018. 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 or above to be the equivalent of grades C or above, the regulator (Ofqual) advises that the results in subjects with the new grading should not be compared with previous years. However, to maintain some semblance of comparability, albeit with the caveat above, numerical grades have been compared with Ofqual's approved equivalences and these results should therefore be understood in that context.

### Destinations of leavers

All Year 11 students proceeded on to post-16 education and, again, the vast majority at RGS, but some choosing other schools and colleges which offer particular subjects or courses that RGS does not.

Year 13 students continue to be ambitious in their career aspirations with the majority applying for university but others taking up prestigious apprenticeships, going directly into employment or taking a planned gap year. This year there are 13 students taking up this option. Last year a higher proportion of students chose to take a year to consider their options, given the uncertainty regarding the higher education provision during the pandemic. The Sixth Form Team supported 19 former students, of whom 15 were able to secure firm offers and have embarked on a university course this autumn. The careers staff and sixth form team provide support and expert guidance to all students, whatever their intentions, so that they can make fully informed decisions.

Over the last year there has been a particular focus on ensuring that the careers advice given to students is neither narrow nor focussed entirely on university application processes, to ensure that all students are encouraged to be appropriately ambitious and are supported in achieving their ambitions, whatever they are. This year this has included students travelling overseas to pursue prestigious scholarships, university courses and apprenticeships, as well as supporting students choosing to go straight into employment. We are hugely grateful to the support given to all our students by Sixth Form team.

### University Destinations

This year 148 UCAS applicants (including 19 former students of the school who were making post A-level applications) applied to universities with the Russell Group universities remaining very popular. Success rate at gaining offers to these very competitive universities was over 64%. However, students have also secured places at equally prestigious institutions, such as St Andrew's and Bath, and other students have secured overseas, highly competitive sports scholarships, apprenticeships and UK-based choral and performing arts opportunities. As usual, there is a strong northern

bias in our destinations, with Newcastle by far the favourite with 18, whilst Northumbria has another 5. Durham has 9 students this year, with Liverpool at 7, Manchester at 6 and Leeds and York at 4 each.

Further afield we have 6 students going to Nottingham and 1 to Nottingham Trent, 4 to Bath, 2 to Bristol and 3 each to UEA and to Exeter. Only 2 students are going to London this year, with 1 each to Imperial and LSE, but a big cohort going north of the border, with 8 to Edinburgh and 1 each to Dundee, St Andrews and Strathclyde.

In this very difficult year, where students were competing for a reduced number of places compared to last year, because of the number of student who had deferred university entry from last year, 100 of the 148 applicants achieved entry to their first choice institution which is a reflection of their careful work and well prepared applications plus the very high academic standards that the RGS students reach.

Of those applying to read medicine, 6 of the 7 who held offers successfully achieved their places, as did both applicants to dentistry. There were no successful applicants to read veterinary medicine this year, but 2 of the 5 applicants to law secured places. 5 of the 6 Oxbridge applicants who were given offers achieved their places.

We wish all our students moving on from RGS the very best of luck and send all our good wishes. Students leave RGS as alumni of the school, and we enjoy keeping in touch with them all, and hearing their news!

### **School Admissions**

The school's main points of entry for both day and boarding students are into Year 7, Year 9 and Sixth Form (Year 12). North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) is responsible for administering admissions into Year 7. The governors' Admissions Committee closely monitors the entrance test arrangements to ensure that the potential applicants and the school are not disadvantaged in any way. In 2019 NYCC changed the testing format to one of a single day, which, on the basis of the evidence the committee has analysed, did not impact significantly on those Y6 pupils sitting the test. Due to the pandemic, the test for entry in September 2021 was deferred to November 2020.

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 the test taken at the school in early February. This entry point again proved popular this year.

Every year the school admits a large number of new students into the Sixth Form (Year 12) based on their achievements at GCSE. This year was no exception when 47 new students joined RGS. They quickly feel part of the school, contribute widely to school life and achieve excellent results. They also bring a wealth of experience and talent which enhances the school community, and often become school office holders when they move to Year 13. The Sixth Form Open Evening takes place in late January each year with applications due by mid-February. We hope that this year it will be held in school, but the online virtual open days for entry to Y7, Y9 and Y12 were all successful.

### **Staffing**

Governors are only too well aware that the success of the RGS is a consequence of the expertise, dedication and commitment of both teaching and support staff. At the end of each academic year a number of governors usually have the pleasure of interviewing a group of the Y13 students just prior to their departure from RGS. This is always an uplifting experience and, without exception, each year students describe the unending support they have received from the staff team who go that extra mile to ensure that students can reach their full potential. We were not able to undertake this exercise this year, because of the school closure, but we have received numerous notes of thanks from leavers who have echoed those comments previously received. We hope very much to be able to talk to our Y13 students at the end of this academic year.

Each year a number of staff leave RGS to pursue their careers in other schools, often in promoted posts, or through retirement. This year saw the departure of nine members of staff, each of whom has contributed hugely to RGS over their time in school. They were: Mr Clark (Head of Religious Studies), Mr Miller (Teacher of Biology and Rugby), Mr

O'Donovan (Teacher of Mathematics), Ms Heslop (Teacher of Mathematics) and Miss Lancaster (Data Manager) who have all retired. We thank them all most sincerely for their huge contribution to the life of the school and wish them a long and happy retirement. Mrs Seymour (Teacher of English) has left the school to work nearer to her home; Miss Raymond (Teacher of Geography) and Miss Norton (Teaching Assistant) have both left and are re-locating within the UK. Mrs Roy (Head of Inclusion) has left to take up a promoted position.

We have welcomed a number of new staff to the team including Mr Spiers (Senior Houseparent, School House), Mr Cornish (Head of Religious Studies), Mr Barrass-Hemmens and Mr Davidson-Martin (Teachers of Mathematics), Mrs Colville-Robins (Teacher of Geography), Mr Saxon (Teacher of Physics), Mrs Greenwood (Teacher of Biology) and Mr Younger (Teacher of PE). We also welcome Mrs Nelson (Plus One Coordinator) and Miss Donkin (Student Counsellor) as well as Mrs Emery (School Health Worker), Mrs Parks and Miss Barron (SEN Teaching Assistants) and Ms Britton and Mrs Sala (General Teaching Assistants). Miss Marshall is providing maternity cover in the PE department and Mrs Johnson in the DT Department. We wish them a long and successful career with us at RGS.

## **Governance**

At the end of the academic year Councillor Mike Chambers came to the end of his term as our local authority governor. Mike has served as a governor for 8 years and has been a wise and guiding hand to the work of the Board, and the school. He has served on the pastoral committee and student exclusion panel. We are extremely grateful for his commitment and service and wish him well for the future.

During the year we welcomed Mrs Helen Stiles as a co-opted member of the Board, bringing particular expertise from her background as a senior teacher. Helen has worked across all sectors of education. A previous head teacher of a very successful independent school, she is now teaching in a secondary school.

Professor Kiran Fernandes has joined the Board as a parent-elected governor. Kiran, who has an academic career at the University of Durham, brings a wealth of talent and expertise. He is a boarding parent and serves on the boarding and finance and personnel committees.

Our constitution deliberately makes provision for a large governing board, principally a mixture of parent-elected and co-opted governors. Each year there are vacancies which we try to fill matching 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 vacancies arise or making their interest known to the Chair of the Governors in an email.

## **Governors' Committees**

This is a snapshot report giving an overview of the work undertaken within our governor sub-committees. Accepting the limitations of this, below are synopses of governor priorities for the last year.

### **a) Boarding**

The primary focus of the Boarding Committee remains to ensure that boarders are happy, safe and secure within the school community. To achieve this, the committee has continued to apply a high level of scrutiny to all aspects of boarding at Ripon Grammar School throughout the academic year. There have been regular reports from Caroline Day, Assistant Head (Boarding), on the well-being of pupils, on COVID-19 measures, reviews of maintenance and catering requirements, and updates on relevant policies. In addition, the committee considers issues relating to both safeguarding and health & safety at each of our termly meetings.

The last academic year saw a number of important developments. The appointment of Caroline Day has led to a wider strategic oversight. The Boarding Development Plan, focusing on the next 10 years, has been completely revised and updated. A number of maintenance projects have improved boarding provision in both Houses. Further projects will be implemented over this academic year, particularly in School House. All these improvements take place against a backdrop of increased number of boarders in both Houses. It remains the committee's ambition to continue this growth, expanding

and improving upon the already excellent boarding facilities, whilst always returning to the defining focus that is the well-being of all within this community.

## **b) Curriculum**

The committee meets each term and calls upon the Headmaster, Deputy Head (Academic) and Deputy Head (Teaching and Learning) to give evidence and answer questions, and also calls other senior staff as necessary.

The disruption to the normal patterns of teaching, learning, assessment and reporting caused by the enforced school closure, and the restrictions on activity when open, have been considerable. Governors have monitored the situation closely. Outstanding effort and commitment by staff (and indeed by parents during school closure) coupled with the usual cooperation and determined ambition of students has allowed learning to progress as close to normally as possible. Subjects with practical elements have been especially affected but teachers have devised imaginative ways of substituting the hands-on experience. During school closure lessons were all online. While the first period was satisfactory, it is clear that lessons learned then allowed a much better provision in the second period. Lessons were sharper, more varied and allowed normal progress. Governors asked about a few lessons that weren't apparently up to scratch and asked leaders to monitor closely. More students than usual have displayed anxieties and concerns and this has put additional demands upon teachers in their pastoral roles. We received regular reports to ensure the systems were able to cope and provide students with all the support they needed.

Governors' monitoring of students' learning, progress and attainment has had to be modified. The usual comparisons of RGS performance at GCSE and A Level with that in groups of other schools would be meaningless since there was no standardisation between schools in 2020 or 2021. The school has a wealth of historic data and this has allowed us to check that results in public examinations have been in-line with expectation for each student and typical for RGS in normal years. Consequently, we are assured that our students' grades accurately reflect their abilities, efforts and progress. Governors approved temporary changes to the internal assessment and reporting cycle to allow teachers the time needed to make all the assessments required for external exams. Nevertheless, we still received plenty of assessment data which allowed us to question academic leaders about the progress of each group of students. We have regularly given close attention to the progress and attainment of students in potentially vulnerable groups, including those with specific learning needs and those qualifying for Pupil Premium. The Governor for Inclusion is a member of the committee and gives a report at each meeting.

Despite the unusual circumstances, developments in the curriculum offered have been maintained. The academic year saw the new sixth-form curriculum commence with the expectation, for most students, of a menu of three A Level subjects and participation in the Plus One programme which allows students to choose a range of activities including the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Governors and the school are keen to enhance and extend the EPQ which provides students with a different, challenging intellectual experience and carries weight in university applications. During the year, governors were pleased to approve curriculum developments for introduction in September 2021:

- Increased time for the second modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9
- Introduction of A Level Politics
- Introduction of GCSE PE

## **c) Finance & Personnel (F&P)**

One of the major responsibilities of the governors is careful oversight of the School's finances with much of the detailed monitoring work delegated to the F&P committee.

Just like in many other areas of the School, over the last academic year the major challenge has been dealing with the effects and consequences of the pandemic and its adverse impact on the School's financial position. Unlike many other

State Secondary Schools, RGS ordinarily benefits from two additional and sizeable sources of revenue – its boarding proposition and its Letting income. Unfortunately, these were very severely and negatively impacted:

- There was effectively no boarding during the Summer Term 2020 and the Spring Term 2021 with consequential very limited fee income – over £430k of originally budgeted fees were not received. To compensate the School has effectively managed down variable and other discretionary costs and where possible negotiated deferrals of other commitments.
- Similarly, Lettings (capable of in excess of £150k pa) have been severely and adversely impacted by both the pandemic and by an ongoing noise planning dispute (now resolved) restricting the letting of the 3G Pitch.

As a consequence the School's financial reserves (surpluses) have been understandably eroded. In March 2020 (at the onset of the pandemic) the surplus stood at £178k. Our current projection for the current financial year (to March 2022) is that the aggregate surplus will be £90k after the current in-year contribution of £5k. It should be acknowledged that during this two year period the School still undertook notable Capital Expenditure projects amounting to in excess of £250k.

It is now possible that with a continued return to normality – and with the associated prospects of optimising both boarding and lettings income - significant in-year surpluses can again be achieved that can enable the School to look forward with confidence at further developing early feasibility plans for the development of major estate capital projects that were understandably deferred at the onset of the pandemic.

By far the biggest expense in the School budget is staff pay, and governors are proud to demonstrate their commitment to maintaining the excellent staff team within RGS – who, as previously described, are the key to the success of the RGS community.

The F&P Committee also monitors staff appointments and staff welfare, as well as staff performance. In a climate where the recruitment and retention of teaching staff nationally is challenging, governors remain very pleased with the appointments made during the last year, a reflection of the reputation of the School in attracting strong applications. The appraisal process for all staff in RGS is robust, and governors are again pleased to note the very positive outcomes for staff as a result of this.

Governors are grateful for the expertise of our School Bursar, Mrs Alison Balsdon, who ensures careful and prudent management of financial resources.

#### **d) Pastoral**

The pastoral committee has an overriding responsibility to ensure the highest standards of care and welfare of students in the school including their safeguarding. The wellbeing of the RGS students and the RGS community, as a whole, is the focus of our meetings. The committee meets with and receives reports on pastoral matters from the leadership team within the school – which includes Heads of Years 7, 8 and 9, Head of Upper School, Head of Sixth Form and the Senior Leadership Team.

We have spent a lot of time reviewing how are students are coping with Covid matters, and heard individually from each Head of Year and Head of School on the issues facing form and year groups. We had reports on the extra levels of support provided during lockdown and on efforts to support the whole school community during a very unsatisfactory and disruptive time. As it became apparent that schools would not be returning to normality, new teaching methods and pastoral approaches had to be developed and implemented, and new arrangements put in place for the key exam year groups and new entrants to Years, 7,9 and 12 and to monitor vulnerable groups. Evidence from student wellbeing surveys was used to improve the arrangements during this challenging time for staff and students.

The pastoral committee prioritises safeguarding - and has at each meeting reviewed the school's safeguarding records and ensured that our response to the safeguarding review has been timely and robust.

#### **e) Premises**



This year has seen significant progress on a number of important projects identified as part of the long-term school estate development plan. These include:

- Major changes to improve pedestrian access/safety;
- The conversion of Ellington House (now reverted to its original name of Bishopton House) to create improved boarding staff accommodation upstairs and a new school reception and offices downstairs (allowing some reallocation/re-use of space elsewhere on site);
- The complete refit of the food technology area (made possible with a Wolfson grant).
- Increasing boarding capacity (School House Annex).

These major projects have been planned and managed in-house which has allowed rapid progress to be made with a particular focus on delivering quality/detail within tight budgets. Careful planning and project management has ensured successful progress of these developments, however, this approach does place additional pressure on the school's premises manager and also requires assurance and oversight.

The development of outline plans for improved dining facilities and a new performance space has progressed slightly slower than hoped; however, this work should provide a sound basis to begin to explore options for funding these major developments shortly.

Further improvements to the school premises have also been delivered this year. Work has included ongoing priorities in relation to premises-related health and safety, site security, continuing investments in energy efficient lighting plus a number of core fabric capital projects funded by NYCC. This year has also seen the school exit from the main subscription elements of the NYCC Maintenance and Servicing Scheme (MASS) (ahead of its restructuring). This returns this annual subscription budget to the school, allowing greater flexibility in future, but also brings additional work to deliver this maintenance activity. The Committee is monitoring this to ensure a smooth transition. The Committee extends particular thanks to school premises manager Andy Hogg, and his small team, for all their work to bring about these projects this year.

### **School Publicity and Marketing**

Mrs Ruth Savage continues to work extremely actively in her role of Marketing and Publicity Manager for the School. Ruth has been instrumental in the online publication of RGS News which is emailed out monthly and well received by current students, alumni of the school and our community. Over the course of the year there has been a presence associated with RGS on social media with regular updates and advertisements on Facebook and Twitter. Since August 2018, the RGS Twitter Reach has continued to increase exponentially to over 200,000 in July 2020. These platforms are now being utilised as main areas for marketing our school and in particular the boarding facilities. The absence of 'real' open evenings has meant the increased use of online resources for virtual open evenings for new Y7 and Y12 students this year.

### **Co-curricular Activities and Achievements**

The breadth of co-curricular activities on offer at RGS continues to increase and Governors are extremely grateful to staff who undertake these voluntarily to ensure an excellent educational experience for all at RGS, with the key focus being on helping all our students develop as all-round individuals. Covid-19 has of course prevented the vast majority of co-curricular work since March. We have missed the musical performances, concerts, plays and sports fixtures - but are delighted that in modified forms, these opportunities were reintroduced towards the end of last year, and are set to resume fully this academic year.

School trips and educational visits have been very limited over the course of the year and we are all looking forward to these becoming a routine part of school life. . The Pupil Premium funding the school receives enables all students to

access these opportunities. Covid-19 means that at the moment there is no ability to undertake overnight trips, and school trips during the summer term (including the World Challenge Trip) were sadly cancelled. However once safe to do so, I have no doubt of our continued commitment to World Challenge and our other popular overseas trips. Last year saw a record number of students participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and governors were delighted to learn that the expeditions were able to continue in albeit modified forms over the summer term. We are very grateful indeed to Mr Highton and Mr Higson for supporting this very important and worthwhile programme..

Last year, the usual Charity Week, held before the Autumn Half Term Break, had to be modified due to the Covid restrictions. Despite this, activities such as the 'Everest Stair Climb', virtual quizzes and lunch time challenges resulted in more than £3k being raised by students for the work of The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust; a charity chosen by students which supports young people from the BAME community access career paths and understand the opportunities available to them.

Within the Headmaster's half-termly newsletters, RGS News and our social media presence, the wide range of opportunities plus the exceptional commitment of staff and students to the co-curricular life of the school is detailed. Governors are delighted at the strength and success of the co-curricular life at RGS, and the value that the school places on the array of wider curricular engagement and success. We hope that as we move through the current restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic, we will see a gradual resumption of activities outside the classroom.

### **Communication with Parents**

The school website continues to be developed. The implementation of 'My child at school' – an electronic record of an individual student's life at RGS, along with the website, means that communication with parents is now paperless. All letters which are sent home are hosted on the website as a matter of course but are now emailed out to parents using the IT platform Bromcom. This means that letters from school will feature in your email inbox from [bromcom@ripogrammar.com](mailto:bromcom@ripogrammar.com).

We would ask parents to check the website - and their inbox - on a regular basis to ensure they are fully informed.

Given that e-mail communication is routinely used, **it is of course vital that the school has an up to date email address**. Many parents follow the school's achievements via social media. RGS news is published at least termly, updating parents and students on the activities taking place within school. The Headmaster writes a newsletter half termly to ensure that events of importance are communicated with parents. Governors therefore hope that parents do feel that they are fully informed about all aspects of school life. If this is not the case please do let us know.

Despite the huge challenges we have all faced, governors are delighted to report another exceptionally successful year for Ripon Grammar School. On behalf of the Board, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Headmaster and the staff team for their professionalism and commitment to the education and care of the students, and all parents for their continued support to the school.



Elizabeth Jarvis  
Chair of Governing Board  
September 2021