



Re-founded 1555

Ripon Grammar School

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12 July 2019

Headmaster's Summer Newsletter 2019

Dear Parents

Leaden skies and damp mornings have kept the cricket field a green swathe this year unlike the parched 'Caribbean' scene that we beheld last year. Of course, the green of the cricket field is pale in comparison to the deep evergreen plastic of the 3G pitch that is receiving its marking this week. If all goes to plan, the pathways and pitch will be ready for September. In addition, I can also announce that planning approval has been granted for the new changing facility that will be sited at the corner of the 3G pitch and Johnson House and which will have capacity for 60 students to change and shower, officials' changing and some storage capacity for equipment. This should be completed by early October if all goes to plan. The grass rugby pitch on the Memorial Field will be ready for use hopefully in January. In this regard, the summer rain has been a blessing for its maturation. Overall it will prove to be a tremendous facility for the school when all is up and running.

The end of term fast approaches and there has been the usual bustle of events in school. Last week we had a very entertaining Jazz Evening during which some well earned half and full music colours were presented. Sadly, Sports Day, in its traditional format, had to be cancelled due to the building works but the events were held across the week and it will return reunited in 2020. On Wednesday this week, Lower School Prize Giving was a tremendous celebration of student endeavour over the year. It was a real pleasure to welcome back Mr Ed Ellerington [OR] to address the school and tell us about how his entrepreneurial ventures at school led on to a career in finance and property development. His message, I am sure, was an inspiration to many and his full story can be found in the current edition of Clocktower. After much anticipation, the first night of our Lower School Play [whose title I can't repeat] was performed yesterday. Set in the wilds of 11th Century Scotland, the play involves murder, witches, cauldrons and a severed body part or two. There were towering performances from Will Curtis [3D] and Eva Joussemet [2D] as Lord and Lady Macbeth, with great supporting roles from all the cast, all under the able direction of Mrs Seymour and Mr Fearnley. Well done to all.

Finally, next Friday, we celebrate our founders' benefaction in our commemoration service in the cathedral which will involve all students and staff.

Staff Departures and New Arrivals

It is with sadness, of course, that we say goodbye to a number of staff this term who leave us for pastures new.

In Johnson House Miss Paulley leaves us as Senior House Parent and we wish her well in her new role in London. I know that in her short time with us she has done so much to care for our girl boarders. In September we will be welcoming Mrs Sue Rowe who is currently a houseparent at Dallam School, Cumbria.

In the Music department, we say goodbye to Miss Fallows and Mr Steeper. Miss Fallows has greatly supported the department this year as music technician and Mr Steeper has covered Mrs Morpeth's maternity leave. I know that both staff will be greatly missed and their impact in such a short period of time has been tremendous. Miss Emily Taylor will be covering for one term until January.

In the Art department, Mrs Garmory will also sadly be leaving us after 4 years of dedicated service and more recently as head of PSHCE. Mrs Garmory's abilities as a superb teacher of art will be a loss to the school but I am very pleased to announce that Miss Ball will continue in September as a full time member of staff and she has already made a very impressive start this year.

After 5 years of service we also say goodbye to Mr Seymour as our Director of Music. He takes up his post as Director of Music at Ampleforth College. As many of you know Mr Seymour has raised the profile of our co-curricular output enormously to such an extent that our ensembles regularly perform on public occasions. [The chamber choir's choral evensong in the cathedral is to be particularly recommended!] It is clear the level of passion Mr Seymour has inspired in our students and we wish the choir well as they embark on their trip to Germany next week. Mr Barker joins us in September from his role as Head of Music at King James' School, Knaresborough. A multi-instrumentalist, I know he is very keen to maintain the co-curricular musical ambitions of the school.

In Mrs Southwell we say goodbye to an exceptional professional and highly respected member of our teaching staff. Mrs Southwell joined the school in 2006 and for the last 13 years has been a teacher of Business Studies and Economics, with stints as PSHCE Co-ordinator and Work Related Learning and Enterprise Coordinator. For the last 6 years she has been Inclusion Coordinator and SENCO, a job she has done superbly well. Mrs Southwell is held in deep respect by the staff at this school and we wish her well in retirement. Mrs Patricia Etherington joins us from Greenfield Community College, Darlington where she is currently SENCO.

Finally, after 21 years of unswerving service, we say goodbye to Mrs Pickard. Since 1998, she has been our Biology Technician but has also been a long serving devotee of the Bewerley Park experience and has accompanied many school trips including World Challenge. Until recently, Mrs Pickard was also a long serving member of our boarding community as a houseparent. Mrs Pickard has worked tirelessly and so positively for RGS and I know how much her vast experience in the science department will be missed.

We will also be saying a temporary goodbye to Mrs Gallagher and Mrs Seymour and wish them all the best for their maternity leave. Mrs Jasmine Cortazzi joins us in the English department from Dundee High School where she is currently Head of English and Mr David Cocks will join the Biology department from Ampleforth College to cover their absence.

I would like to pass on the school's best wishes to our departing staff, wish them all the best in their new roles and of course encourage them to keep in touch at any opportunity.

Internal Teaching Appointments

Two staff take on some additional responsibilities next year with Miss Anderson adding deputy head of sixth form and IT coordinator to her business studies and economics role. Mrs Stevenson will take on the coordination of PSHCE. We will be conducting a whole school audit of our PSHCE, tutor and assembly programmes to ensure not only that we remain fully compliant with the latest statutory guidance but also to ensure that our teaching and pastoral instruction represents the very best of advice and coverage to equip our students with the pressures and issues of modern life.

Pastoral Re-Structure at Key Stage 3 and 4

I would also like to announce some important developments in terms of our overall Pastoral Structure. From September, we will be moving across to the National Curriculum nomenclature of Year 7-13. Traditionalists I know may well cling on to First Form, Second Form etc. and somewhat incongruently, we will retain the title 'Sixth Form'.

The Lower School Office in September will be replaced by three *Heads of Year* who I am delighted to announce are as follows:

Head of Year 7	Miss Hoskins	HOY7@ripongrammar.com
Head of Year 8	Mr Barber	HOY8@ripongrammar.com
Head of Year 9	Mr Harding	HOY9@ripongrammar.com

In terms of responsibilities, each Head of Year will be directly responsible for all students in that year group, including the 4 or 5 strong tutor team and its pastoral programme.

The Upper School Office remains at present unaffected:

Head of Upper School	Miss Clark	UpperSchoolOffice@ripongrammar.com
Deputy of Upper School	Mrs Johnson	UpperSchoolOffice@ripongrammar.com

Miss Clark and Miss Johnson will continue to divide responsibilities for Year 10 and 11 and are responsible for the tutors in those two years.

Inevitably such a restructure creates a number of logistical issues and I am pleased to announce that over the summer holiday we will be re-designing the current reprographics room [opposite the Mathematics Block] to create a 'pastoral hub' - with office space, interview and meetings rooms to accommodate 7 members of staff, including the SENCO.

I am also pleased to announce that we have appointed Mrs Emma Hewison to the new post of Pastoral Support Officer. This role will be to support the work of the Heads of Year and Upper School Office as well as provide a presence in the new pastoral hub over 5 mornings a week for students to go to if there is a problem. This will be in addition to the already vital work played by our School Health Worker, Mrs McIntyre.

In terms of communication can I please remind parents that their first port of call *should normally be the student's tutor* rather than automatically the Head of Year. However, a more immediate response may be gained by contacting the pastoral hub via Mrs Hewison, by email at pastoral@ripongrammar.com. She will be able to handle or re-direct matters appropriately. Clearly, in the short term, it may take a little time to ensure smooth channels of communication between staff, parents and students but hopefully these will be overcome quickly. The key purpose is to ensure that access to pastoral care for students is responsive and swift.

Routine Items

Looking forward to next year can I please remind parents of a few routine matters:

Dogs - while not wishing to be 'dog-unfriendly', can I please remind parents that we are technically a no-dog site and dogs, if they are brought on to school site, should remain in cars and should not be exercised on the school grounds.

Drop Offs - parents should not drive up the main school drive between 08:30 and 16:40 to drop their child at school. This of course does not apply in the case of emergency or if medical need necessitates.

Contact Details - please do let admin@ripongrammar.com know if your contact details change as soon as possible when they occur. You can check the details we have through the My Child at School login.

School Communication - As a general principle we will communicate with parents only if we feel it is necessary. Please assume the principle that 'no news is good news'. For example, you may have been aware of the recent Hep A outbreak at Outwood Academy, and we have had a couple of parental enquiries on this matter. However, following NHS guidance, and since there was no clear risk to our students, we chose not to communicate on this issue.

Looking Ahead to Next Year

No doubt next year will as busy as ever and we are already planning ahead for September in terms of some key aspects of our development plan. Pastoral restructuring is part of that, as already mentioned. A few others I would like to highlight here:

Estate Development - We will continue to upgrade some of the public areas of school such as the Foyer and North Corridor but there will also be some important work undertaken over the summer and autumn creating the pastoral hub, internal work in Johnson House, alterations and improvements to the swimming changing rooms, relocation of A1 computer lab to S1, pedestrian access etc. for example. At the Lower School Prize Giving, the Chair of Governors also spoke about our vision to create a new dining facility and performance space and we will be embarking on that important piece of work in September.

Communication - We have invested in a new electronic calendar solution for September that will give parents up to date information about school events. This calendar for example will be able to be synched with your own calendars via mobile phones etc. More details about this will be out soon.

Environmental Matters - Mr Bruce has recently set up an eco-committee and we have lots of plans looking ahead to making RGS play a small but important part in this global issue. I know this is an impassioned matter for our current students and the new School Officer Team in terms of our charity work. We look forward to planting out 300 saplings from the Woodland Trust in November, and I will be enlisting student volunteers to help with this.

We are currently mid-way through our rollout of LED lights across the school, in addition to the new low wattage computers installed in September. This is reducing our energy usage; it is nice to be told that the LEDs in the Maths Block are now saving £8 per day of taxpayers' money!

Further plans will be developed to remove our single-use plastic bottles and in the mean time I would encourage parents to ensure their child brings a reusable water bottle to school rather than purchase single-use containers in the canteen or PO.

We are also engaging with the *Ripon Together* initiative, exploring how we can encourage students to cycle [albeit safely] to school.

Fundraising

School funding remains a matter of national debate. You may be aware for example that sixth form funding has been frozen at the same level since 2015 and that next year's funding for Key Stage 3 and 4 is unlikely to keep up with inflation once pay costs have been factored in. Some elements will have to be found out of existing school budgets. RGS is no exception.

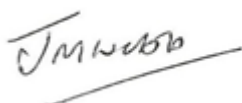
We are fortunate that we have an active Friends Society and an Activities Fund to allow us to purchase some of the things we might not otherwise have access to. I am very grateful to the work The Friends do in raising money for individual projects and I particularly support their new direction this year in raising funds for specific school items. This year the target is £15,000 to refurbish our two geography classrooms and geography office. This is vital work that cannot be accomplished through normal revenue, given our other estate priorities. What will be created, we hope, will be two bright and ambient classrooms for the study of geography at all age groups. I do urge you to get behind this campaign, safe in the knowledge that the money you give will be spent to the benefit of every student in the school.

The Activities Fund continues to provide vital assistance for school transport for trips and sport, school productions and musicals and even very recently new computer equipment for the music department. We are heavily reliant on this funding too. My concern of late is that this level of funding has been declining, as fewer new parents have signed up to giving. I would urge all parents to consider making a donation, however small, to this fund. It will always be appreciated since without this funding *we would have to drastically cut back on the co-curricular output of the school*. The online form is available [here](#).

And so, the final week approaches and thoughts inevitably turn to holidays and sunny summer days. I would like to reiterate my best wishes to our students on results days in August. We will be welcoming our Upper Sixth Leavers back to a December reunion to receive their academic prizes and to hear how their first term away from RGS has gone. Further information on that event will be available next term. I can also announce that next year we will be *combining our November Upper School and July Lower School prize giving days* to create one end of year *Whole School Prize Giving* on the penultimate day of the summer term. This will recognise the achievements and progress of students from all year groups, as well as being a fitting occasion to celebrate the rich array of music, drama, sport and co-curricular achievement.

With best wishes for the summer break

Yours sincerely



Jonathan M Webb
Headmaster