



### From the Headmaster

With so much uncertainty and so many significant challenges facing each and every one of us on a daily basis, manners could easily be regarded as a rather quaint, dusty concept, better consigned to the bookshelves, alongside such guidelines as *Debrett's Handbook*. This compendium, first published in 1769, was the self-acclaimed authority on all things etiquette and behaviour: everything from the correct usage of cutlery in formal dining to the accepted methods of greeting members of royalty. Pre-dating this, in the fifteenth century, William Horman, a Headmaster at both Eton College and Winchester College during the early Tudor Period, coined what was to become a mantra for many – *Manners maketh man* – in other words, an acknowledgement that good manners define and characterise an individual.

This was by no means a philosophy restricted to Horman. In the early 1600s, George Austen drew up Statutes for the RGS which consisted of 31 articles relating to the organisation of the School. One of the Articles stated that every scholar was to pay eight pence per year, four pence of which was for the purchase of rods and brooms for use in the school. A set of tableaux created, ironically, to celebrate the School's 400-year celebrations in 1909 included the image above – entitled *Rods and their use* – as part of the rich tapestry of the RGS's history! Discipline was, indeed, harsh and Latin was beaten into unwilling students, hence the need for a plentiful supply of rods. As well as discipline, a code of conduct was laid down in Article 29: "*Honesty and cleanness of life, gentle and decent speeches, humility, courtesy and good manners shall be established by all good means. Pride, ribaldry, scurrility, lying, picking, swearing, blasphemy and other such vices shall be sharply punished.*"

The last few weeks have put us all under extreme pressure and have necessitated a change to so many of our established routines, to so many aspects of our daily life which until recently we simply took for granted. We have asked a lot of our students, staff and indeed parents to get used to this new norm and our interactions with each other have had to change radically. A modern-day rewrite of a handbook of manners would paint a very different picture of social norms and expectations: correct wearing of masks; appropriate social distancing; acceptable group sizes; and so on. And yet, despite all the change, I have never been more confident as to what matters most for our community at the RGS. The phenomenal professionalism and dedication of all my staff have ensured the boys have been safe, supported, and able to lead as normal a school life as is possible in the circumstances. What has impressed me most, however, has been the innate compassion and generosity of spirit which have characterised our daily interactions. Gratitude and thanks, words of support and understanding, going out of one's way to help others and being considerate and compassionate: all of these have meant that our community, rather than being daunted by the obstacles, has tackled it with energy and positivity.

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I am justifiably proud of the academic culture of the RGS where a love of learning and a desire to be stretched and challenged define who we are. Our commitment to the co-curricular and extra-curricular life of the School has never been more apparent as we have overcome not insignificant obstacles to maintain a diverse and varied programme. At our heart, however, we are committed to preparing our boys for the future as considerate citizens who are aware of their responsibility to make a difference to others, who are conscious of the importance of family, friendship and loyalty, and who are characterised by kindness and compassion. It is these aspects which have been so very much in evidence this first half of term at the RGS and I am immensely proud to lead such an inspiring group of boys and staff. It is reassuring that manners do, indeed, maketh man.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a restful, relaxing and well-deserved half-term break where, despite Article 29, I am happy to grant your sons the opportunity to indulge in some light *ribaldry* and *scurrility*! I look forward to seeing them return refreshed and ready for the second half of the Michaelmas Term.

## Latest News

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**Academic:** RGS students have continued to enter a number of national competitions enjoying considerable success. **Anish Goel** (U6) was commended by the judges in the Marshall Society essay competition for his essay entitled, *Since World War Two, countries have reduced trade barriers and have tended to move towards free trade. Should the world follow a similar path respect to immigration and open all borders?* **Oliver Walsh's** (U6) essay in the Oriel College Lloyd Davies Philosophy Prize was particularly commended by the judges as one of the top four entries.

**Charity:** Thanks to the whole community's generosity an amazing £1,821 was raised from Mufti Day. This will make a genuine difference to our nominated charities – the *RSPCA*, *SOS* and *Médecins Sans Frontières* – as well as the RGS Bursary Programme.

**Independent Learning Assignment:** The ILA Presentation Event showcased short presentations of the students' research projects as, once again, the sophistication and originality of research were very much in evidence from our Sixth Form. The finalists – from both the Arts and from STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) – presented on topics as diverse as voting habits to global warming, Down's syndrome to the possibility of an electric Boeing 737, the Gacha genre to the chemistry of dyes, Brouwer's fixed point theorem to pot-luck politics. Any of the finalists would have been worthy winners; however, in the end, the panel of governors crowned **Salvatore Nigrelli** (U6) as winner in the STEM category with his talk entitled *Supramolecular Cages: Their design, chemistry and applications* and **Stan Lawrence** (U6) as winner in the Arts category with *The 12 Note Conspiracy*.

**Model United Nations:** Eight RGS boys attended the first-ever virtual MUN conference held by Wycombe Abbey. It was modelled on a virtual US Senate with senators represented by students across four different schools. The debate was intense and the boys impressed with their tenacity and passion when speaking. Overall, **Omeet Atara** (U6), **Joe Colton** (5P) and **Boldi Paladi-Kovacs** (5H) were awarded highly commended delegates to round off an excellent RGS performance.

**Sport:** Despite the challenges of government guidelines, the School has run a full programme of games, practices and competitive fixtures throughout the first half of term. This included for the first time in our 500-year history a set of regular, year-group cricket fixtures against schools including Haileybury, Hampton, Reed's and Tiffin. In addition, the vast majority of our sports have managed to run a regular programme. We are very grateful to all our staff who have gone out of their way to ensure that the boys have had the opportunity to continue to enjoy sporting opportunities safely.