



From the Headmaster

New Normal is the latest Covid-related phrase to dominate editorials and articles, replacing the previous go-to language of *historic* and *unprecedented*; however, this new addition seems to be a particularly underwhelming concept. By definition, normal can be associated with bland, with even pejorative, negative undertones, synonymous with ordinary, boring, predictable routine. This week's RGS Scholarship Conference, which went online for the first time, however, championed a very different angle as the theme of the *New Normal* was tackled by academics from a variety of fields: social, political and STEM. From such challenge as has been faced in the light of the pandemic, inevitably comes great creativity and innovation. Far from promoting a bland new world, the speakers highlighted the rich emergence of everything from technology to trade, from climate to vocabulary. Far from a sobering message, there was a consistent sense of energy, excitement and hope for a dynamic future as we start to gradually emerge from the implications of lockdown.

For schools, I see an additional benefit to the concept of the *New Normal*. For me, I see it as a chance for us all to remind ourselves of what actually is most important in our lives. I have spoken frequently about the kindness and compassion shown by our whole community over the last twelve months, the phenomenal support where individuals have gone out of their way to look out for each other. We have learned not to take for granted family and friends, health, freedom, and – especially, as far as I am concerned – take-away coffees from the High Street!

The *New Normal* also provides a gilt-edged opportunity to redefine what we regard as acceptable, what is expected as the normal way of conducting ourselves. The School has adapted to the changing landscape in a way in which we should all be proud, but we have also woken up to some of the issues which have, unfortunately, been unaddressed societal problems for many, many years. Our desire to make real change through looking at diversity and inclusion and making a real difference to our students through our actions and our words have not come soon enough. The death of Sarah Everard and the testimonies of those women who have been the victims of the inappropriate attentions of pupils at schools similar, in some ways, to our own, are also a perfect opportunity for us to look carefully at our own culture and our own willingness to stand up for what is right. These issues are simply about treating others with the kindness and decency that every single human-being deserves in the twenty-first century and these should be the absolute hallmarks of our *New Normal*.

Remote learning has demonstrated that we can change as an institution, and change quickly. There is no reason why the RGS cannot make an equally significant change in culture, outlook and attitude: far from being a bland catchphrase, the *New Normal* provides a fresh start for us all.

As I reflect on this term, both remote and physical, and as I look through *The Register: A Term in Tweets*, the images and posts in this publication seem to encapsulate so much of what I have mentioned: a continuing desire to have a culture which is defined by inclusion and equality, a focus on a spirit of togetherness and collaboration, a real desire to make the very best of every situation irrespective of the challenges and the obstacles, and – most importantly – the kindness, warmth and good humour which characterise every aspect of school life.

Thank you to you all for your support over the last few months. I would like to wish you and your families a restful, relaxing and healthy Easter break.

Latest News

Environment: In the *Earthshot Challenge*, the RGS team, *The Tree Climateers*, comprising Third Form students **George Christiansen**, **Thomas Dowson**, and **Zac Warham** came first to win the competition. The judges were impressed by their fantastically creative and well-researched presentation addressing pollution solutions for the Guildford Area.

Physics: In national competitions, RGS students have once again excelled. In the second-round papers of the British Physics Olympiad and the British Astronomy & Astrophysics Olympiad (BPHO), **Alex Thow** (U6) was in the top ten students nationally and has been invited to the Astro selection camp to compete for a place on the UK team. **Nathan Page** (U6) was also in the top ten in the BPHO and likewise has been invited to the Physics selection camp, competing for a place on the same UK team. In the Senior Physics Challenge RGS boys secured 6 Gold, 7 Silver and 6 Bronze awards. **Alex Jones** (L6) was top scorer from the RGS entrants; of note, Fifth Form boys **Efe Görgüner** and **Michael Wu** were only one mark behind. Finally, in the Intermediate Physics Challenge, RGS boys were awarded 21 Gold, 23 Silver and 1 Bronze awards: by some distance our record in this competition. Fifth Form student **Jan Czarnek** led the way with a score only beaten by four students nationally!

Scholarship Conference: The RGS Scholarship Conference 2021 was a huge success and with the theme of the *New Normal*, it really couldn't have been more apt as the conference was staged entirely virtually, allowing more than 600 unique views of the talks and in excess of 150 viewers tuned-in for each live component. In addition, the conference was joined by students and staff from across the RGS international community as well as the local academic community. As Head of Scholarship Mr Bradford noted, "This bringing together of minds in the pursuit of scholarship is very much what our school and our family of schools is all about, and I am very proud to have helped facilitate this." With experts from various fields, topics included Brexit, future trade with Africa, the language and posturing of polarization, the recent BLM movement in the UK, pandemic and future pandemics, climate change, the promises and dangers of Artificial Intelligence and the importance of science education.

Senior Prefects: The Headmaster is delighted to announce the Senior Prefect appointments for 2021/22. School Captain is **Ishan Nathan** and he is supported by the two Deputy School Captains, **Matt Shaw** and **Tom Wright**. Senior Prefect Co-ordinator is **Dilan K Patel**. The other House Captain appointments are as follows: Austin House is **Matthew Kassir**; Beckingham House is **Kiran Wright**; Hamonde House is **Austin Humphrey**; Nettles House is **Matthew Slominski**; Powell House is **Oli Rathmell**; and Valpy House is **Sebastian Norris**. In addition, the Headmaster has appointed **Sebastian Burrage**, **Jack Burrows**, **Oliver Coombes**, **Joe Dewar**, **Jack Doyle**, **Alex Jones**, **Matt Scully** and **Mattie Sutton** to the Senior Prefect team. The School thanks the outgoing team for all their hard work and wishes the new team all the very best of luck.

Staff News: We bid a sad farewell to Janet Ward as she retires. Janet has been an institution in the School Office since 2002 and most parents will have spoken to her at some stage. Janet has been a phenomenally efficient, helpful and supportive colleague and we wish her all the very best in her retirement. In addition, we congratulate Head of Art Mr Rozier on reaching the milestone of 100 terms' teaching at the RGS; we look forward to the next 100!