



From the Headmaster

I hope you and your family had as relaxing a summer holiday as possible and that your son is refreshed and ready for the start of the school year. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the RGS family all our new boys and their parents. The beginning of the academic year and a fresh intake mark an exciting stage and I have every confidence that the new boys will make a real impact upon the School. I look forward to getting to know them individually and to observing them as they develop and flourish.

I often speak of how the last academic year at the RGS has been extraordinary for all of us with so many challenges to be faced. The last few days alone have seen the formal opening of our latest international school RGS Dubai – an astonishing, inspiring environment for learning – as well as the official start of our exciting merger with RGS Prep. I very much look forward to providing further insight into these projects in the coming weeks.

The pandemic has, understandably, cast a shadow over the last 18 months or so and this makes the return of the students to the RGS, with a semblance of normality, all the more special. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of my staff who have worked tirelessly over the summer preparing for the start of term. The health, safety and wellbeing of our whole community are always of paramount importance and never more so than in the current climate. Despite the relaxation of restrictions, we continue meticulously to assess all aspects of school life and sensible precautions will continue to be in place, of which hygiene and sanitisation remain crucial. Please may I stress again that with an expanded range of symptoms for Covid, particularly in young people, please err on the side of caution when considering sending your son to school. In the interests of the whole school community, we will continue to have a low threshold for sending students home when unwell.

As well as our community's physical health, our emotional health is of equal importance. We devoted a whole day yesterday, both support staff and teaching staff, to an inset on wellbeing. We all play a significant role in embedding in our school a culture where each individual's psychological needs are met: kindness, compassion and friendship; being understood and listened to; a deep sense of belonging; the satisfaction of achievement; the autonomy to have control over elements of one's life; a sense of purpose to fulfil goals and to make a difference to others. Our students cannot achieve if they are not in a good place emotionally and this continues to be our absolute focus and priority. We are incredibly proud of the success of our boys and, indeed, striving for excellence and harbouring healthy ambition are admirable traits which epitomise the RGS; however, these are achieved in a caring and supportive way. For us, our School Values of inclusivity, scholarship, integrity, respect, courage and collaboration define who we are and allow us to face our successes and setbacks equally. The RGS is a welcoming environment where a mutually supportive ethos is at the very heart of our philosophy. Each individual at the RGS has so much untapped potential; to unlock this, the boys must be confident and happy, open and honest, and realistic enough to appreciate that things will not always go smoothly.

If you have any concerns with regard to your son, however seemingly trivial, please do not hesitate to contact the School via his Tutor. We appreciate that boys will have understandable concerns after disruption to their education and, in this light, it is all the more important that problems are raised and swiftly addressed: the repercussions of lockdown and the associated issues of the pandemic on young people's mental health have been well documented. My pastoral team are always on hand to provide support. Each boy has a number of members of staff he can turn to if he wants advice or guidance. His Tutor is likely to be his first point of contact; however, every individual also has their Head of Year, Head of Section, Housemaster, Personal Tutor (Fourth Form and above), the Deputy Head (Pupils), and the School Nurse. In addition, the senior boys, with the benefit of professional training, take an active role in the mentoring of junior boys to provide peer support. Talking openly and airing concerns are the most important lessons we can teach our boys.

For the benefit of those parents new to the School, the RGS newsletter *The Bulletin* is published electronically every two weeks. We are very proud of the efforts and achievements of our boys and this fortnightly publication provides an opportunity to celebrate the many diverse successes enjoyed by our community. I am always keen to hear news of RGS boys so that their energy, industry and achievements can be recognised; please do not hesitate to keep me informed. As well as *The Bulletin*, the RGS website and social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter – also provide useful means of staying updated with news from the School and gaining an insight into daily life. In addition, each day, *The RGS Today* is emailed to all students and this, again, provides the boys with an invaluable way of keeping aware of the many diverse opportunities open to them.

Our speaker at our Inset yesterday reminded us that a strength of a wall is not derived from the strength of the individual bricks but from the mortar that binds them together. I could not be more proud that the mortar of the RGS is firmly based upon the respect, kindness and values which are at the very heart of our ethos. With trust, inclusivity, community, collaboration, a sense of identity and belonging, in essence a feeling of being at home we can all flourish. So, as we embark on a new term, I wish your son a very happy and fulfilling year and look forward to meeting you – I hope in person – during the course of this academic year. In the meantime, I hope, in the most positive way, for as ordinary and normal a year as possible!