



## From the Headmaster

Integrity, inclusivity, respect, courage and collaboration are, of course, five of our School Values and yet equally they could easily be the agreed mantra as the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) takes place in Glasgow. The conference has rightly dominated the media in recent days as the climate talks bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree co-ordinated action to tackle climate change.

This could not be a more pressing concern for us all as 2021 draws to a close. Our students are going to be the generation which most acutely feels the repercussions of previous generations and they will need to take the initiative in finding creative and sustainable solutions to many of the problems. The teenage climate campaigner Greta Thunberg spoke for many in August when she summed up the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as a “*solid (but cautious) summary*” of the best available science. “*It confirms what we already know from thousands of previous studies and reports,*” she said. “*It doesn’t tell us what to do. It is up to us to be brave and take decisions based on the scientific evidence provided in these reports.*” As world leaders continue to meet, they would be wise to listen to an emerging generation of young individuals passionate about, and committed to, the environment.

As proceedings continue in Glasgow, so today Guildford hosts a Mock COP26, a re-creation of the climate summit, with 11 teams from local Surrey schools including the RGS each adopting the position of a delegate country. The RGS participants have spent the last few weeks researching the impact of the climate and ecological crisis on the EU, our designated focus for the conference, the socio-environmental impacts of policy responses between ambitious climate action versus no action, the costs of adopting various policies, and finally settling on the policy position they feel most benefits the EU. This is just one example of how our students are studying and engaging with climate, biodiversity science and policy in a way that previous generations simply haven’t. They have, however, good reason to. Without action, their futures will be increasingly dominated by the heatwaves, storms and floods that have featured in climate projections since an early IPCC report in 1990 opened with a foreword calling global warming “*potentially the greatest global environmental challenge facing mankind*”. That was over 20 years ago.

The younger generation are increasingly making themselves heard. Disillusioned with empty promises, they are quite rightly arguing for honesty and meaningful action from leaders. Those attending COP26 have an obligation to listen to their arguments, and involve them in decisions that will affect their futures more than anyone else’s.

To be inclusive and considerate across all nations, to collaborate effectively despite our differences, to work with mutual respect, to value integrity and honesty: all of these will be key. Most of all, however, to have the courage to take meaningful action is going to be of paramount importance: the time for talking must come to an end; it is a time for action. I am proud of our School Values and extremely proud of the genuine desire of our students to make a difference. As David Attenborough summed up when addressing COP26, *"We are, after all, the greatest problem solvers to have ever existed on Earth. If working apart, we are a force powerful enough to destabilise our planet. Surely working together, we are powerful enough to save it."*

## Latest News

**Half Term:** A number of trips and events took place over half term. Our Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh teams enjoyed the stunning setting of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Equally they experienced at first-hand how quickly the weather conditions change! All groups impressed with their organisation, determination and resilience. In addition, the Upper Sixth Form Biology students visited Dale Fort, Pembrokeshire, for field work: periwinkles, limpets, ribwort plantain, dog whelks, crabs, bladder wrack, serrated wrack, sea lettuce, and much more besides including a friendly juvenile seal were all experienced on the beautiful Pembrokeshire beaches.

**Music:** Having given its last public performance in St Albans Cathedral back in early March 2020, the newly-reformed Joint Schools' Chamber Choir travelled to sing Evensong in Chichester Cathedral for the first time in many years. Comprising the best singers from both the RGS and GHS, the group rose to the challenge and sang to an exceptionally high standard before a large congregation. Noble's grandiose setting of the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in B Minor*, with its simple yet expressive approach to word-setting, filled the glorious acoustic of the cathedral magnificently. This was followed by Bairstow's anthem, *Save us, O Lord*. Here the choir managed the transition from the hushed opening melodic lines to the more vigorous and bombastic central fugal section with real skill. Singing of such a high standard was met with many lovely comments from the congregation and clergy alike and we look forward to returning to Chichester again in the future.

## Sports News

**Badminton:** **Sid Shirol** (2L) secured a clean sweep of Silver medals in the singles, doubles and mixed doubles at the National Circuit Under 13 Gold Badminton Tournament.

**Cross-Country:** The RGS hosted the annual Haskell Cup cross-country relay event. First run in the 1950s, this annual event attracts teams from all areas of the south-east and as far as St Albans, Brighton and High Wycombe. Teams of four compete on a challenging course on Merrow Downs. 52 teams competed in this year's Haskell Cup which includes races for both girls and boys. Winners were Judd School, and for the girls, Guildford High School to win the Perrett Shield. RGS runners impressed with some excellent performances and times on a picturesque course.

**Fencing:** In the French Under 20 National Foil Championship held in Paris during half term, **Xavier Wallin** (5P) came 74th out of a field of 205; this was a superb result for Xavier as he is very young for an Under 20 national event.