



### From the Headmaster

Advent is a season of looking forward, of hope and anticipation. This period is traditionally all the more important set against the context of darkening winter days, colder weather, and, indeed in the current climate, gathering storm clouds in the media with regard to the pandemic. Our innate need for positivity and brightness is, therefore, one reason why this season is filled with traditions which by their very nature are reassuring in their familiarity, which feel timeless and ageless, and which all – physically or figuratively – bring much-needed light into our lives. Against a backdrop of darkness and difficulty, Christmas lights in the High Street, the illumination of trees, and the sparkle of decorations all provide joy, hope and celebration, as do (for some!) the first playing of Shakin' Stevens or Mariah Carey on the radio, or that first door – and first chocolate – of an advent calendar, or the inescapable festive decorations in our daily lives.

The situation with regard to the pandemic remains, however, something which all schools have a duty to monitor carefully. Recent guidance by *Public Health England* and *Surrey County Council* has imposed a number of restrictions on schools as a list of guidelines and recommendations were published. I circulated a letter yesterday outlining what impact this guidance has had, regrettably, on our plans for the rest of term. I would like to reiterate that we always do absolutely all we can to avoid any disruption to the curricular and co-curricular life of the RGS as well as to school events; however, equally, I have a duty of care for our whole community and our guiding principle and priority will always be the safety and health of our boys, staff and parents alike. I can assure you that no decision is entered into lightly and without significant reflection and consideration. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my Planning Committee, comprising senior staff representing all areas of school life, for all their work and professionalism behind the scenes and also to you, the parents, for your continuing support at a time where, necessarily, some decisions will cause disappointment and frustration.

I am delighted, however, that many of our events are still able to continue – albeit with certain restrictions and limitations – and I have no doubts that the concerts, drama production, Christmas Fair, and our *Carols from the Cathedral*, to name but a few will provide a fitting finale to our term and provide much needed light. As author Richard Evans once said, *It is often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars*. I have no doubt that all these events will be genuinely uplifting and joyous occasions.

I am very proud how the RGS community continues to negotiate periods of difficulty and darkness; the flexibility, creativity and patience of my staff always impress as they have to reinvent and adapt to changing circumstances, often with very little planning time – this they always do with good grace and positivity, and always with a focus on what is in the best interest of the boys. I look forward to the sparkle and shine of the next two weeks and thank you all again for your support at this time.

## Latest News

**Debating:** Our Lower Sixth German debating team, consisting of **Kurt Brodersen, Oliver Meares, Robbie Timberlake** and captain **Fraser Vaughan**, won the first round of the Goethe Institute online debating competition. They were arguing against an exclusively vegan offering in school canteens, as they explored the health benefits, the economic challenges, and the right to self-determination.

**Model United Nations:** The RGS held its first physical Model United Nations conference since 2019, with **Aradhya Soneja** (U6) a driving force behind the event. With over 150 delegates from nine schools, including schools who had no prior experience of the MUN, RGS boys impressed throughout, including a number of newcomers. It was also great to have Old Guildfordian **Omeet Atara** return as guest chair.

**Music:** After the success of the annual Ensembles Concert in the Auditorium which, as always, saw uplifting performances from boys throughout the School, we were delighted to host our first Concerto Concert for two years. The RGS Symphony Orchestra and Concerto Consort treated the audience to an extraordinary display of musicianship. After opening with Rossini's famous overture to *The Barber of Seville*, the performance of *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saëns was a breathtaking display of talent and musicianship. The Senior Woodwind Ensemble followed this up with three movements from Mozart's Serenade in B flat major, *Gran Partita*, before the Symphony Orchestra returned to conclude the evening with a performance of Shostakovich's *Jazz Suite No 2*.

**Volunteering:** Our first working party in two years saw boys from the First to the Upper Sixth Forms planting trees at South Wood with Blackwater Valley rangers. After a full day, they planted 300 trees today, including gorse, rose, dogwood, rowan and oak.

## Sports News

**Chess:** The RGS hosted a qualifying tournament for the National Schools Chess Championship. Seven teams and just under 50 pupils entered, including our B, C and D team (our A team qualify automatically) and, impressively, our B, C and D teams qualified as the top three teams to progress to the regional stage.

**Football:** The 1st XI enjoyed a 2 – 1 victory against King Edward's School Witley with goals from **Alec Murrin** (U6) and **Alex Turner** (L6).

**Golf:** The RGS team took on Epsom College in the second round of the Independent Schools Golf Association knock-out competition at the iconic Walton Heath Golf Club, which has hosted many prestigious tournaments including the Ryder Cup. Against extremely tough opposition, the RGS team performed impressively.

**Rugby:** Two tough block fixtures were compounded by bleak winter conditions which made handling and fluent rugby all the more challenging. Against St Paul's School, the RGS enjoyed its greatest success in terms of results in recent memory, including an excellent 20 – 18 win for the 1st XV, especially after trailing 0 – 15. A 7 – 0 victory for the 2nd XV and a clean sweep of wins for our Under 15 teams were other highlights. To cap off a fine day, our junior sides secured six out of six wins against Epsom College. The RGS continued this form against Abingdon School with back-to-back wins for the 1st and 2nd XVs and the Under 15A and B teams.

**Shooting:** Our shooting team competed against Epsom College in a shoulder-to-shoulder match for the first time since 2019. Despite bringing a relatively inexperienced team, the top three scorers on the day were from RGS, led by **Bruce Behn** (U6) with 96. In the Fours Match, our A Team won with a score of 375, while our reserve pair also narrowly secured victory.

**Swimming:** In the ESSA National Relay Finals for the fastest 20 schools in England, two of our relay teams competed at the London Aquatic Centre, the 2012 Olympic swimming venue. The RGS swimmers performed magnificently, and the day was characterised by a number of personal bests as both teams achieved finishes faster than their qualifying time. The Under 13s were placed 11th overall and first reserve for the final while the Under 15s qualified for the final: an extraordinary achievement.