



From the Headteacher

9th November 2009



Dear Parents

Welcome back after the half term break. Once again, I find myself wondering where the time has gone. Perhaps it is because I'm getting older? For many of us, this term started in mid-August, with the GCSE and A Level results, and much has happened since then. Details of many of the events and activities that have taken place this term can be found on our **website**. I encourage you to visit it regularly because we add news and information messages onto the front page all the time so it is an excellent way for parents to keep abreast of current events in school and essential information.

Speaking of which, please remind your child to check the **extra-curricular** section on the website. A link to it is on the front page. It lists activities held at lunchtime and after school. If your child is interested in joining an activity they can look for further details on notice boards around school or ask a member of staff in the relevant department. Also, in assembly recently, Mr Farrell explained how we put aside an amount of money for students to start up their own clubs and societies. Do encourage your child to put their proposals to him.

Following our outstanding Ofsted report in May, we were delighted that the **examination results** at RLS in the summer were the best ever. This is true for both attainment (raw standards) and achievement (the progress students make against our value added benchmarks). At both GCSE and A Level, we met or exceeded all of our ambitious targets. Despite this, we are not complacent and where we have identified under achievement in the school, intervention strategies have been quickly put in place and are being vigorously pursued.

We are grateful to Stowe School staff for the time they give to many of our students in putting them through 'mock interviews'. We reciprocate by providing interviews for Stowe students. Last year 6 RLS students won places at **Oxford and Cambridge** with many others winning places at the Russell Group of Universities.

There has been **major investment in ICT** over the summer with the installing of £40K of equipment following our successful application to the Wolfson Foundation for an educational grant. Every classroom

in the main block and new building is now equipped with a projector, docking station, sound system and DVD player. A new sixth form only ICT suite (with 20 computers in it) has been created in Rotherfield and B22 has been converted into a dedicated ICT suite: it is now partitioned off from the rest of the library and has a large interactive whiteboard in it.

Over £14k has been disbursed to various departments by the **Friends' Association**. These included picnic benches around school and also for the Rotherfield garden; a greenhouse for environmental work in Biology; a coin separating machine for the finance office; archive storage boxes for school memorabilia; choir folders for the music department; support for a Laser Cutter in technology; gym mats for the PE Department and equipment for the Art and Psychology Departments. One major donation was for a Digital Signage System which will operate from a number of venues across the school to improve communication. We are very grateful to those parents for their hard work in raising funds that are used to such good effect to support our students and staff at the school.

It may interest you to know that we had 1265 students on roll on 1 October, the date when the last census was carried out. This is **the highest number of students we have ever had**. A key reason is the very robust recruitment of new students into the sixth form and the retention of many of our Year 11 students. There are now nearly 400 students in the sixth form.

Just before half term, my Deputy, Andrew Cooper and I met with Jim Waddington, Service Director for Amey Transport. We put forward two main areas of concern regarding **Home-School transport**: firstly, there are some late buses after school. Mr Waddington told us that Amey have a target of picking up all students within 30 minutes of the end of the school day but some buses are arriving later. It became apparent that the reasons for this are complex and we are continuing to have discussions with both Amey and the Local Authority to try to resolve this problem.

Secondly, we mentioned that parents and students have been contacting us about a range of other transport problems such as late morning collections, overcrowded buses and changes in routes. If you have specific complaints, we were informed that you should contact Phil Dyson at Amey on 01296 383140 or by e



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mail at a-pdyson@buckscc.gov.uk

If you are submitting a written complaint you should also send a copy to Helen Halfpenny who is the Client Transport Compliance Manager at Bucks County Council: 01296 383745; hhalfpenny@buckscc.gov.uk

Finally, please copy Andrew Cooper and/or myself into any e mails that you send.

Do you know **what your child is studying this term?** Last academic year some parents gave feedback after receiving the academic tracking for their child that it would be useful to have a brief idea of what is being studied each term. All Heads of Subject have contributed to an online document containing a brief outline of what will be covered in all year groups. They will be updated termly. These outlines can be viewed and the whole summary printed by choosing the 'Curriculum' tab at the top of the webpage and selecting the appropriate curriculum overview for your child.

Our students never cease to amaze us. This week **four RLS students won the Wendover Regional Final of The Senior Team Maths Challenge**. They are Mark Lewis 13R, Laurent Stephenson 13D, Alan Miscampbell 12NR and Ming Chung 11R.

This team competition for 16-18 year old students tests mathematical, communication and teamwork skills. Over 50 regional heats take place across the UK during November 2009, and only the winners of each heat are invited to the National Final on Wednesday 3 February 2010 in London, with prizes presented by Professor Marcus du Sautoy.

This competition has only been running for 3 years; In November 2007 RLS won the regional heat and came 6th in the National Final; In November 2008 RLS were narrowly beaten into 2nd place in the regional heat by Dr Challoner's Grammar, who went on to come 6th in the national final. We were therefore particularly delighted this year to beat Dr Challoners Grammar into 2nd place by a very solid margin of 6 points, and Aylesbury Grammar into 3rd place! Congratulations to the team and thank you to Mrs Shuttlewood in the Maths Department.

RLS School Improvement Priorities 2009-10

Our School Improvement Priorities for this year are designed to build on our Ofsted inspection, thus maintaining the momentum of improvement that has taken place at RLS in the past three years. This is particularly important with a change of Headteacher during the academic year. We thought it would be useful to share our priorities with you. In doing so it is important to state that some of these priorities are medium-term i.e. we would be seeking to achieve them over the next three years.

Priority 1: We want students to have '5 Great Lessons a Day.'

Ofsted, May 2009: "To raise standards further, leaders should ensure that teachers *where necessary*:

- make greater use of assessment for learning to provide appropriately high levels of challenge in all lessons
- increase the pace of learning in lessons
- provide students with clear advice about how to improve their work."

The italics are important. Ofsted recognised that there is already much outstanding teaching in the school. But we're a large school with over 80 teachers and we have work hard to ensure consistency. Our challenge is to find ways of spreading the outstanding practice across the school.

Priority 2: We want to develop a bold and innovative curriculum that meets students' needs.

Ofsted, May 2009: "The curriculum is being constantly developed...in order to raise standards further."

We will be talking to staff, students and parents about our curriculum offer, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Priority 3: We want the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers to be outstanding.

Ofsted, May 2009: "Leaders and managers are working hard to engage with parents and carers and to take account of their views in decision making, welcoming their comments and responding well to their concerns."

We recognise that our parents have very high expectations and that an area of development is to build on innovations of the past three years by involving you more heavily in decision-making on key matters affecting the school.

Priority 4: We want to successfully introduce online reporting to parents.

This will be a statutory requirement from Sept 2010.

Priority 5: We want the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion to be outstanding.

Promoting community cohesion is a relatively new Government requirement.

Priority 6: We want the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures to be outstanding.

Although Ofsted commented that there is a very strong safeguarding culture in the school, we recognise there is scope to improve some aspects, for example, risk management.

Priority 7: We want to involve students in almost every aspect of learning, teaching and school improvement.

Finally, can I thank you very much for all of your kind words regarding my moving on. I have been both surprised and touched by the response and will be in contact with you just before I leave at the end of term. Between now and then I will be seconded to my new employers for two days a week. However, before that happens I am recovering from an operation that I had during half term. I should be back in school from 16th November. Life is never dull, is it?