

## Final Assembly, July 2008

This summer will see the arrival of the Olympic Games in Beijing in China. I am sure that many of you will watch at least some of the games on television, or perhaps you're even planning to go. Those who are competing will constitute the very best in their events; they will have worked extremely hard for the right to compete; and they will be aware that they have a responsibility to do the best that they can, for themselves and for those they represent. Some of the athletes will go on to win medals, succeeding beyond their wildest dreams; others will return home in relative failure, although even to have been chosen is to have succeeded. But all will have learned from the experience, and will return home proud to have represented their country.

I would like to think that the Olympic Games can also be seen as a metaphor for life at school. All of you have passed the entrance exam for this school, and you have therefore already experienced success. Almost all of you have worked hard this year and have achieved a great deal. Some have been medal-winners, whether in exams, sport, cultural activities, or in overcoming personal difficulties. I know, because your parents tell me, that most of you are proud to be at this school and to represent it in everything you do. Your teachers are your coaches, encouraging you, cajoling you, explaining to you how to improve, but then having to watch from afar while you compete unaided. And, like all athletes, you have a large team of support staff, working behind the scenes to further your development. And I? I am the person sitting watching the Olympics, appreciating your hard work and enjoying your successes.

The Olympic movement has very clearly stated aims. Their website reads as follows:

The aims of the Olympic movement are to enhance human development and make the world a better place in which to live. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism is based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

I would like to think that these are aims to which we at this school would also aspire. As you listen to my report of this term's activities, you might like to reflect on how we, through education, culture, and sport, try to make this school a better place in which to live.

This assembly will be different from previous events. This week we have held two Prizegiving Assemblies for the 1st and 2nd Forms, and the 3rd and 4th Forms respectively, at which prizes and cups were presented. I also gave a report on the term on those activities which apply only to those year groups. Today I shall therefore focus on those activities which cross year-groups, or highlight particularly good achievements, as well as reporting on activities in the Sixth Form.

The main focus of this term for senior pupils has, of course, been **examinations**. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Forms, along with some Fourth formers, have completed their public examinations, and I hope very much that their efforts will be rewarded. The Sixth Form have started work on their university applications, and have each spent a week on work experience. These included medical placements in surgeries and hospitals, and legal placements at both local law practices and large City firms. Other students worked at local primary schools and special needs schools, and there was a wide range of other placements. My thanks to Mr Buzzacott, Miss Thomas and other staff for their organisation.

Following the Junior Mathematics Challenge earlier this term, five of our students qualified for the **Junior Mathematical Olympiad**, open only to the top 5% of the entry nationwide. William Humphreys and Kasia Warburton performed extremely well against the best mathematicians of their age in the country and were awarded Bronze medals, the first time that we have had such success at this level. Many congratulations to them.

Meanwhile, in the **Chemistry Olympiad** for Sixth Form students, Emma Eldridge and Robin Aggleton won Silver awards, Cassia Aldred, Dan Telford and Dan Price were awarded Bronze

whilst Emma Luscombe was Commended. These are our best ever results in this competition, so congratulations to them.

We have celebrated the National Year of **Reading** in a number of ways - staff and students have made reading pledges, we had a week long murder mystery competition, and students have been participating in a reading competition. The scheme has encouraged students to broaden their reading and to fulfil new challenges. Well done to all who have taken part. This year's Public Reading Competition was won by William Sargent of 4TBW – congratulations to him.

We again hosted our annual **Feeder Schools Forensic Evening**, in which teams undertook investigations to find the perpetrator of a crime. The event, organised by Miss Egan-Smith, was much enjoyed by the prep and primary schools who attended.

Turning to sport, the 1st XI **cricket** team had a very successful season, winning 10 of their 15 matches, drawing 1, and losing only 4. They secured some very good wins against strong opponents including Tiffin's, St John's Leatherhead, and the MCC, in which Charlie Steedman scored an attractive 75 not out to win the game. The best batting performance of the season was against St John's, in which we scored 260 in 50 overs. The top score of the year was from Guy Duhig, who made a stunning 129 against John Fisher. Our bowling attack was formidable, with several players able to chip in with wickets, but Phil Davies was consistently outstanding, taking 29 wickets at an average of 10 to claim the player of the year award.

The 2nd XI had a season in which the first half was disrupted by weather, and only one of the four matches played was won. After half-term they won all three matches with excellent performances from Lucas Birrell-Grey and Peter Edwarde.

The 1st **boys' tennis** team had an enjoyable season, and, although we didn't win our section of the Surrey league, this was more than compensated for by the victory of James Feneley and James Watts in the St George's Invitation Tournament. This is the first time the school has won this prestigious event after more than 20 years of competing in it, and included victories over schools including Epsom, Eton, St George's, and national champions Reeds in the final. A great result for RGS tennis.

Meanwhile, the 1st **girls' tennis** team played in the Surrey Leagues. Their best result was a 5-3 victory over Sutton High, with first pair Natasha Bhana and Sophie Harding Rolls beating Sutton's 2nd and 3rd pairs, while Fourth formers Lottie Colquhoun and Lucinda Lohse beat Sutton's 1st and 2nd pairs.

**Sports Day** this year survived the weather, and an excellent day was enjoyed by everyone, with large numbers of pupils taking part, and many parents lured down to Hartswood by the prospect of a barbeque, beer tent and ice cream van. Several school records were broken, with perhaps the most remarkable being new school record times in all four of the relay races. Congratulations to everyone who took part.

Our **golf** team had an outstanding season, winning 10 of their 12 matches including victories over Epsom, Cranleigh, Charterhouse and Dulwich College. They also won the South East division of the HMC National Golf Foursomes, the most prestigious golf competition for independent schools in the country. As a result, they travelled last weekend to the national finals. Here they were up against some very strong schools, including Millfield and the national academy at Loretto, and performed well to achieve a commendable 5th place. However, Mitchell Farrer and Lucas Birrell-Gray produced some excellent golf to win the pairs competition. Many congratulations to them.

Before leaving school **sport**, I should mention some of the successes of the junior sides. The U12 girls have proved to be a very strong group, winning both the South Surrey Athletics and their Surrey tennis league. The U12A cricket team have also shown great potential for the future, winning 9 of their 12 matches. The U13 Girls' Athletics team have had an outstanding season winning both the Gunnell League and the District tournament, while the U14 girls also won every

competition they entered. And the U14A cricket team are county champions, having beaten KCS Wimbledon in the final of the Surrey Schools Cup. Congratulations to them.

The final of the **Boden Cup** for tennis was played on Monday: Ella Coleman beat Abi Bowden 6-4 to become the first girl to win the trophy. Congratulations to her and to all who entered. And, in an addendum to my March report, I have only recently discovered that Hannah Frankum in the Second Form played county **rugby** last season at U15 level for Sussex. Well done to her.

As always, this is the busiest term for the **Duke of Edinburgh Award**. 70 Third formers began their Bronze Awards, while many of the Fourth Form have now completed their Bronze Awards and have been out on their Silver expeditions. Record numbers of Sixth Formers completed their Gold qualifying expeditions in Wales during the last two weeks, despite the rain, and are now poised to complete their awards. Thank you to the large number of staff who have been out on the hills to help them, and particularly to Mr O'Hara, who retires at the end of this term, and about whom I shall say more later.

The **CCF** Contingent has also been very busy this term, with a Third Form introductory day at Frimley Park, Adventurous Training in Portsmouth aboard HMS Bristol, Field Day for all three sections, with yachting, power-boating, and shooting all on offer. The RAF section has continued to offer flying and gliding to cadets on Sundays. Several students have completed, or will shortly complete flying or gliding courses, with other students embarking on courses over the summer involving sailing, powerboating, shooting, electronics and Mountain Leadership. Congratulations to all who have taken part, and my thanks to all the staff who give up their time to help with the CCF.

Moving on to **charity work**, many of you have given freely of your time and effort over the whole of this year to help others. There is not time for me to read out every event, but I might mention particularly the £1,000 for MENCAP raised by the Fourth Form Pram Race, the £1200 raised by the First Form through their Readathon, and 2GLH's £465 for Presents for the Third World, raised by waxing Mr Rollitt's legs. However, as always, pride of place goes to the Second and Third Form's Tadworth Court Run which this year raised more than £5,000. The total sum raised for the whole year will therefore be somewhere in the region of £13,000. Thank you to everyone for your efforts on behalf of others.

In addition to fundraising, many Sixth formers also contribute to our **Community Service** programme, helping out in schools, home and charity shops across the area. This is a very valuable contribution to our local community, and is often overlooked. My thanks to Miss Ball for her organisation, and to all the students who have taken part.

Moving on to **music**, the Swing Band gave a very successful lunchtime concert at Dorking Halls, and has been busy playing at functions in various parts of Surrey in the run-up to last night's Summer Serenade, which packed out the PMH yet again this year, and provided a fitting conclusion to the Summer Festival. The Upper Sixth bowed out in style with a superb Leavers' Concert, and many of our musicians had considerable success at the Reigate and Redhill Music Festival, including our Junior Voices. There were also many Informal Concerts and three lunchtime recitals.

In addition to the Summer Serenade there have been two other major concerts as part of the Summer Festival. The Joint Choral Concert with Royal Alexandra and Albert School was a triumph, with choirs from both schools joining together under the direction of Mr Wood to sing Fauré's *Requiem*. And last week the Summer Concert took place with performances from a large number of groups. Highlights included the first performance of a piece composed by Rose Hooks for four clarinets, and a rousing final set from the Concert Band. My thanks and congratulations to all those students and staff who have been involved.

Other events in the **Summer Festival** included the Second Form German Day, workshops in photography and French drama, a gym display, Third Form drama performances, the return of Will Edwards' award-winning production of Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, a 1970s tea party, Science at the

Olympics, the annual Art exhibition, Shakespeare Day for the First Form, a performance by the legendary Swingle Singers, and a Guitar Recital. However, this year's most significant addition to the calendar was the Fashion Show, in which students and staff shared the stage to display outfits by major high street names, as well as collections they had designed themselves, raising over £1,000 for the Brigitte Trust. My thanks to Festival Director Mrs Robinson and all the other staff who helped to organise the many events in this year's Festival.

This year's **Leavers' Ball** was held for the last time at the Russ Hill Hotel, and was expertly organised by Mrs Spencer Ellis, with music provided by Mr Rushby's band. It was a very enjoyable evening, but it was impossible for many of us to forget the previous day, when staff and students attended the funeral of **Tristan Griffith**. Tristan had nearly completed his A-level exams when he was killed crossing the railway line at Redhill station. This was a tragic and needless loss of a young man who was about to embark on his adult life. His family and friends are devastated, and I ask you to remember them, and Tristan, in your thoughts and prayers over the summer holiday.

Before I talk about those staff who are leaving this term, I would like to mention three who are not leaving, but are moving from positions within the school.

**Dr Sarah Lawson** has been Head of Biology for the last seven years. During this time she has raised the standard and standing of her department to its current high position, and has set the benchmark for other departments. Dr Lawson has demonstrated outstanding leadership, and I am very grateful indeed to her for all that she has done for Science in general, and Biology in particular. I am very pleased that she will still be with us next year, but teaching only part-time, to give her more time with her growing family.

**Mr Guy Sanderson** has been Head of Sixth Form for the last two years, during which time he has made a significant impact on both students and staff, improving both academic standards and attitudes. In September he will become Deputy Head in charge of staff matters, but I would like to thank him for his hard work as Head of Sixth. And I should also like to thank **Mr John Manfield** for his work over the last six years as Deputy Head in charge of staff matters. He will be standing in for me next time during my absence, before assuming the new role of Deputy Head in charge of Development from January.

Turning now to staff who are leaving us, **Mr Oliver Hartwright** has taught History and Politics for the last two years, as well as coaching both rugby and cricket, helping with the CCF, and being an Upper School tutor. His all-round contribution to school life will be much missed as he moves to teach at an international school in Portugal.

**Mr Chris Morgan** is one of three staff leaving to become Heads of Departments in other schools, which is in itself a tribute to the reputation of this school. Mr Morgan leaves us after five years teaching Boys' PE and Games. He has coached both rugby and cricket, taking charge of the 1st XI for the last two seasons, and has been responsible for the biennial tour to Barbados. He has also been a highly regarded First Form Tutor. We wish him well as he moves to become Head of PE at Tonbridge School.

**Mr Matthew Clark** has taught History for the last seven years, as well as some Politics. He has also been a highly effective First Form Tutor, and has made a major contribution to school sport, helping to coach the 1st XV to the semi-final of the Daily Mail vase this year, and taking charge of much of the administration of rugby behind the scenes. He has organised two tours to South Africa as well as several trips for the History department. He leaves with all our good wishes for the future.

**Mr Matthew Wood** arrived at RGS in 2001 to teach music. He has made a major contribution to the improvement in the standards of music since then, conducting the RGS Singers and Concert Band as well as other groups. He has been Assistant Head of Third Form, and has coached hockey. He leaves to become Director of Music at Notting Hill and Ealing High School in London, where we wish him every success.

**Mr Jonathan Worthen** joined the school in 1987. His contribution to school life has been both varied and of a high standard: he has taught English across the school, as well as Latin in the First Form; he was for many years in charge of the school library; he has run Public Speaking teams with great success; and has coached badminton at all levels. After 21 years at RGS, he will leave a large hole behind him. His many former pupils have been particularly grateful for his high standards and expectations in the classroom, and the staff have appreciated his careful guidance on all matters of grammar and English usage. We wish him well as he leaves to become Head of English at St Catherine's, Bramley.

And finally, **Mr John O'Hara** retires at the end of this term. He joined the school in 1990 to teach Mathematics after a varied career outside teaching, which included qualifying as a solicitor, before becoming a croupier and casino inspector. However, it is for his teaching and for his organisation of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme that he will best be remembered. I am sure that he has lost count of the number of students who have completed Bronze, Silver or Gold awards under his guidance, and the number who continue to return to help with such activities is testament to his legacy. Please join me in wishing Mr O'Hara every joy in his retirement.

I shall not be in school next term, except occasionally. I am spending a term as a Research Associate at the National College for School Leadership, where I shall be conducting research into the effectiveness of school management across the country. As I have already mentioned, Mr Manfield will be taking over during my absence, and I look forward to hearing of your successes from him in due course.

Now it just remains for me to thank all of you, both staff and students, for your hard work over the past term and the year, and to wish you all a very happy summer holiday.

DST  
11/07/08