

The Royal Hospital School



A vision for the future
2009 to 2015

The Royal Hospital School – a vision for the future

1. Preamble/context

The Royal Hospital School (RHS) is currently undergoing a rapid period of change principally in response to a fundamental shift in our relationship with Greenwich Hospital (GH), our parent charity, following a directive issued by the Admiralty Board in May 2004 which stated that:

“It was not consistent with the objectives of the Charter for 90% of the Hospital’s net disposable income to be used for the benefit of the Royal Hospital School; that the Hospital should continue to support the school but that the target should be that not more than 50% of the net disposable income should be used for the benefit of the school by 2015 and that the stretch target should be not more than 40% by 2012.”

Since May 2004 RHS has moved from a position of administrative and financial reliance upon GH to a position of far greater independence; over the same period of time the school has been transformed from one previously caricatured as a naval/military establishment into a mainstream public school.

This paper sets out my vision for RHS as we continue our journey towards becoming a public school of genuine stature and as we become increasingly less dependent upon GH.

2. Overall aims and objectives

My overall aim is to establish RHS as *the* leading independent boarding and day school in the east of England and in due course as a school of national significance and repute. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring that pupils receive an excellent academic education;
- giving pupils the opportunity to experience a broad education of outstanding quality;
- developing pupils’ talents and interests to the full;
- maintaining the school’s unique seafaring heritage and traditional interest in sailing;
- remaining a values driven organisation;
- ensuring that pupils find school an enjoyable, happy and stimulating experience;
- retaining our strong commitment to boarding;
- controlling expenditure and recruiting a sufficient number of pupils to ensure the financial security of an annual surplus of 10%; and
- raising the profile of the school through effective marketing and PR.

3. Key educational themes

Within the context of reaching these overall aims and objectives I believe that the following key educational themes should underpin all we set out to achieve:

(a) Academic excellence and opportunity

I believe strongly in the importance of breadth but that does not imply academic mediocrity.

I am committed to raising the school's academic standards/profile by ensuring that high quality inspirational teaching staff are recruited and retained, by developing the school's academic infrastructure and, when the time is right, by becoming academically more selective. It is my specific aim that more pupils from RHS should gain places at top class universities (the Russell Group), including Oxford and Cambridge, than is currently the case and that at A level we should regularly achieve an A/B pass rate in excess of 70%.

(b) Sport and outdoor activities

I believe in the importance of physical fitness and competition and I also believe in the importance of sportsmanship and integrity on the games field. My philosophy is that we should play to win but within the laws and spirit of the game and not at all costs. Whilst I am keen that we should focus on team sports I also believe that pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their interests and skill in sports and outdoor pursuits which are individual in their nature.

Sport and outdoor activities already occupy an important place in the life of RHS but I aim to raise their profile further by accessing expert coaches from beyond RHS, by encouraging our own staff to develop their coaching skills, by helping our top performing pupils to play at the highest possible representative level, by increasing the number of sports teams and fixtures and by developing our facilities for both sport and outdoor pursuits.

(c) Music and performance

I believe in the importance of music, drama and dance in developing self confidence and self awareness and I recognise how beneficial it is for pupils of all ages to experience the thrill of live performance. I also believe that these activities should be as inclusive as possible.

Music has always played an important part in the life of RHS – in particular the school choir and band have a fine reputation – and the new music school, opened in December 2008, has given us the opportunity to raise its profile further. It is my aim therefore to build on the school's traditional strengths in music by attracting large numbers of high calibre music scholars, by developing links with outside organisations such as the Trinity College of Music, by opening up our facilities to musicians from further afield and by ensuring that we continue to give as many pupils as possible the opportunity for music making.

Drama and dance also have an already enviable reputation for excellence but our facilities for these activities are modest. It is my aim that we should give greater opportunity for performance to pupils in Years 7 and 8 and also that we should improve our facilities for performance initially by modernising the assembly hall and in due course by creating a new theatre.

(d) Leadership

There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise leadership throughout their career at RHS. It is my intention that we will build upon our legacy of leadership based on our historic links with the Royal Navy by continuing to offer all pupils opportunities for leadership and team building and by giving them the necessary support and training to exercise their authority as leaders in a humane, sensitive and sympathetic manner.

(e) Community Service

I do not believe that pupils should focus entirely upon their own needs and aspirations but that they should be mindful of the needs of others and should be prepared to serve the community in which they live and the community beyond school. Pupils already have the opportunity to make a difference at RHS via our peer support schemes and strong anti-bullying culture and they can also participate in community service in a wider sense via the Duke of Edinburgh Award, the Combined Cadet Force, the St John Ambulance Brigade, as Life Guards and as members of our Community Action Team (CAT).

It is my aim that we will sustain the strong culture of community service at RHS and that we develop closer links with our neighbours in the nearby community by continuing to support a local charity each year (such as Ipswich Mencap) and by giving local people access to our superb facilities.

(f) Pastoral care and well being

I believe that it is essential that all pupils and staff are happy and that their well being is given high priority.

RHS has an excellent house system, a fine health centre and first class catering and amongst pupils and staff there is a culture of mutual respect and understanding. Nevertheless there is never any room for complacency and my aim therefore is to ensure that we continue to look after each other, that we promote a culture of well being and that we are all aware of the damage that can be done through selfish or antisocial behaviour.

(g) Christian ethos and values for life

I believe that the spiritual development of pupils and their understanding/acceptance of decency, honesty, integrity, commitment, loyalty, service and self sacrifice as values for life should lie at the heart of the school.

The chapel and the role of the Chaplain have always been of core importance to RHS and my aim is for that to continue to be the case. Within the context of RHS being essentially a Christian community it is my intention that we will continue to welcome pupils and staff of other faiths and be ecumenical in our approach to worship.

(h) The green agenda

Events far beyond RHS have led to a growing awareness of the fragility of the environment in which we live. The green agenda is now part of main stream thinking. It is essential that young people, in particular, have an appreciation of the importance of environmental issues such as recycling and that caring for their surroundings becomes instinctive.

My aim therefore is to ensure that we all treat the environment of RHS with respect, that we do all we can to reduce the amount of rubbish we produce and energy we waste, that we recycle products efficiently and that we reduce our carbon footprint to a minimum.

4. Size/mix of pupils

In the recent past GH took the important and far reaching decision to reduce its financial commitment to RHS by cutting the number of seafaring bursaries it awards on an annual basis (with a long term target of 105 in total). As a direct response to this RHS admitted day pupils for the first time in September 2004 at all levels and began, at the same time to admit a larger, though still modest number of pupils from overseas. The future pupil profile of RHS is difficult to predict with certainty but it is likely that the number of day pupils will rise over the next few years to about 250 and the number of boarders will settle at about 550. My overall aim is for RHS to reach a total population of between 750 and 800 pupils (dependent upon the mix of boarding/day), with no more than 10% of the boarders coming from overseas. This will enable us to generate a financial surplus of 10% of turnover on an annual basis (our financial target).

A school of between 750 and 800 pupils will not only be desirable from a financial viewpoint – it will also enable RHS to experience the benefits of being slightly larger than is currently the case (greater internal and external competitiveness etc) without becoming so large that any sense of intimacy/friendliness is lost.

5. Boarding/day

I am determined that RHS should remain a full boarding school in its ethos and *modus operandi* and give all pupils, whether boarding or day, the opportunity to benefit from a 7 day a week educational experience. In this context I believe that the successful integration of day pupils at all levels is of fundamental importance and that we should do all we can to ensure that our day pupils, as far as is reasonably possible, are given the same opportunities/breadth of experience offered to our boarders.

6. The wider RHS community

Engaging with our alumni and the wider RHS community (parents, friends, former staff etc) is critically important for our future development. We now have an effective marketing and development department and, with the school's tercentenary approaching (2012), there is the added incentive to press ahead with development in this area.

My aim therefore is that we should develop productive links with our former pupils, parents, friends and staff as a matter of urgency, with the intention that these links should be beneficial to the school (potential donors) and to the wider RHS community (retaining links with former friends and colleagues).

7. Facilities

RHS occupies a magnificent site and already has excellent facilities. Over the past few years there has been a major programme of boarding house refurbishment (8 houses in 4 phases) and in 2008 the new Music School was opened. This work has all been financed by GH at a cost of £18million. The site of RHS must remain fit for purpose and so there will be an ongoing need to continue the process of improving the school's facilities and general infrastructure

My aim therefore, through our strategic planning process and with the assistance of governors and staff, is to identify other key structural priorities and to address how further developments can be financed.

8. Implementation

The implementation of the vision set out in this document will be executed via the school's strategic planning process.

9. Conclusion

RHS has a long and proud history; we have a unique seafaring heritage; we occupy a magnificent site; we offer an outstanding breadth of education and we continue to produce well rounded, self confident, unpretentious young men and women who join us from a broad cross section of society. We are in a strong position to meet both the short term and long term challenges we face and we almost certainly have greater potential for development than any other comparable independent school in the UK.

There is every reason for us to look to the future with optimism and confidence!

Howard Blakett
Headmaster