



November 2012

Headmaster's report

The last academic year has been another year of great change for the Royal Alexandra and Albert School. September 2011 saw the admission of our first Flexi Boarders into Year 3 and Year 7. Flexi Boarding replaces the old Day Boarding and in future all new pupils who are not Full Boarders will be admitted as Flexi Boarders. The main difference is that Flexi Boarders stay at the School for between seven and ten nights a year. This reinforces the boarding ethos of the School and further reduces the distinction between the two types of boarders.

We are beginning to feel the impact of the change in government in 2010 as there have been changes in school governance and the curriculum. We are under increasing pressure to become an academy and this is an option that our Governors are keeping under review. We will only become an academy when, and if, it is right for the School.



The government spending reduction has led to the end of schools having 'specialist' status. This school had specialisms in Sports and Maths & Computing, as well as being a lead school for Gifted and Talented. Whilst the official recognition no longer exists (and there are no additional grants any more) we maintain our focus on these important areas of the curriculum. We are also one of the few state schools in the area to offer the three sciences as separate subject options to all our pupils.

On the academic side, there is a move away from the modular approach for assessing pupils at GCSE and A Level. Pupils in Year 10 in September 2012 will be the first tranche of pupils to be assessed with exams at the end of their two-year GCSE course. The new method of assessment means that teaching staff will have to change the way they plan courses and prepare pupils for exams. We have already started this process and had formal end-of-year assessments in exam conditions, for Years 7, 8 and 9 during the Summer Term.

Whilst there have been many changes in the curriculum, we have also invested in the boarding side of the school. In 2012 we completed the extension to Edinburgh House.

The Sixth Form

We have completed our second full year with a Sixth Form and progress made by students has far exceeded what we could reasonably have hoped for in such a short time. There were only twenty-four students in our first ever Upper Sixth in 2011-12.

All sixteen who applied to university gained a place, with nine going on to study Maths, Engineering or Science. Of the remaining eight, seven have either got places on other courses or found appropriate employment. We now have over 140 students in the Sixth Form.



Demand for places in the Sixth Form is strong and we fully expect to fill all our Year 12 places in September 2013.

There is a significant section of students whose families live abroad and who have previously studied at international schools near their home. These students choose to

board in the UK for the sixth form in order to prepare themselves for the transition to university. When they come to visit the school they are invariably impressed with the quality of boarding accommodation and the choice of courses available for Sixth Formers.

A broad and balanced curriculum

Most schools will claim to offer a broad and balanced curriculum but there can't be many schools that offer the diverse opportunities both within and outside the classroom that are available at this school.

This year our pupils could choose from the standard academic subjects and these were complemented by the more unusual BTECs in Horse Care and Countryside & Environment. Out of school they could join allotment club, take riding lessons or care for the chickens.



On the cultural side, we have a new Director of Music who has encouraged a greater number of pupils than

ever to participate in music be it as a singer, instrumentalist or in a band. Our Head of Drama has put on many productions throughout the year including plays, comedies and exam pieces. Pupils have also performed at local venues and attended shows in Surrey and London. Dance is a popular activity within and after school and the termly dance shows feature performances from boys and girls of all ages.

We have been successful at county level in a number of sports and there is more about that later in this report. Pupils have also participated in a huge range of sports including mountain biking, kayaking, table tennis, trampolining, swimming and athletics.

School trips this year have included a history trip to Washington and New York, language trip to Madrid, Geography trip to the Netherlands,



Skiing in Austria, and many trips within the UK. The level of participation in these trips is encouraging as they provide a chance for pupils to gain a new perspective on a subject and experience other cultures.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council sponsorship

In its 250 year history the Royal Alexandra and Albert School has evolved from being two separate orphanages based in London and Camberley and has become a state school based in Gatton Park. The School's Board of Management has been steadfast in its commitment to the origins of the school and each year it offers free boarding places to around ten pupils whose home circumstances make boarding education desirable. Evidence has shown that pupils with difficult backgrounds, who are offered the opportunity to board at this School, consistently exceed expectations both academically and socially.

In recent years, the Board of Management felt that there could be some pupils who live near the school who might benefit from the extended school day that is on offer to Day Boarders (and now Flexi Boarders). They have therefore offered free Day or Flexi Boarding places to local pupils who have been referred to the school by Headteachers in schools in Merstham (the Merstham estate is one of the most deprived areas in Surrey).

This initiative came to the attention of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and they felt it would be a very good way of supporting youngsters from some of the most disadvantaged families. By staying within the structured boarding environment before and after the school day, these children will have access to pastoral support, healthy meals, supervised homework and clubs and activities that might otherwise not be available to them. This is seen as a way of focusing their energy in a positive way and should prevent them from suffering neglect or being drawn in to antisocial behaviour which might be the case if



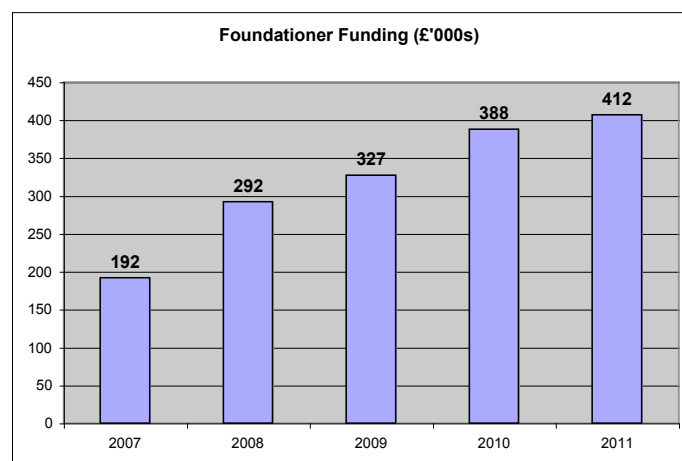
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they attended school for school-hours only. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council firmly believe that the wrap-around care provided at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School will help to prevent vulnerable children from suffering disadvantage in later life. They have therefore undertaken to provide financial support of £9,000 per year for 5 years to support this initiative. This financial support has been warmly welcomed by the Board of Management.

Level of Founder funding

In the year 2011-12 the School's Foundation provided financial support for 80 pupils at the School at a cost of £412,000. The cost of the fees for these pupils is usually shared between the Foundation and other charities e.g. the Royal National Children's Foundation, The Reedham Trust or the Frank Buttle Trust. 'Foundoners' come from families where the main carer is unable to provide for their daily needs. This can arise from physical or mental impairment and often there is a single parent/grandparent who simply can't cope with having the child at home full time. The alternative might be for the child to go into care. By having the child in boarding, the family can stay together without it prompting a crisis.



Founder Case Study - Susan

Due to psychological problems, Susan's mother, who is a single parent, was taken into hospital and Susan became a looked-after child at the age of 9. The attached Social Worker believed that Susan's mother might recover enough to live at home and was concerned about Susan's education. After a number of visits and an interview, Susan started as a boarder within a few weeks of the hospitalisation of her mother.

Susan is of above average ability and did well in boarding, being a member of various sports teams and generally, but not consistently, being in top sets.

Susan did reasonably well in her GCSEs, passing nine and with three at grade A. In addition, and very importantly, she became a school prefect and was an excellent role model for other girls. As she was allowed no social life at home and as her friends were, in the main, fellow boarders, Social Services funded a sixteenth birthday party for her in the school – the first time she had ever had a party.



In the Sixth Form she worked with great dedication and finally realised her real potential by achieving four grade As at A level. She is now in the third year of her Law degree.

Toucan Crossing

As the School has become more popular, there has been increased demand for places. The catchment area has reduced significantly and children now need to live within around 1.5 miles of the school to get a Flexi Boarding place. With so many pupils living within walking / cycling distance of the School the lack of a pedestrian crossing on Gatton Park Road had become a serious issue.

In the period 2000-2008 there were 7 accidents on Gatton Park Road



in the area near the school entrance and three of these involved children. In March 2010 a petition was set up by a parent and this asked the Local Authority to construct a safe crossing on Gatton Park Road.

The School circulated the petition to other parents and pupils and it attracted over 600 signatures. The response from Surrey County Council was that they supported the plan but did not have the funds required to implement the crossing.

The Board of Management at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School felt strongly that the crossing should be built so agreed to fund the works required. The Toucan crossing (which is suitable for pedestrians and cyclists) was built in the Summer of 2011 and is now a well-used crossing point for pupils who are walking or cycling to and from school.

Building update

A number of building projects were completed during the Summer's of 2011/2012 in preparation for the return of record numbers of pupils at the start of the new academic year.

Cornwall House and Edinburgh House

The ground floor extension for Cornwall House was completed. This



meant that Cornwall girls enjoyed the same facilities as the other girl's boarding houses including computer suite, additional common room and refurbishment of all the other areas in the house. This just left the

Edinburgh House extension which was completed in the Autumn Term.

The Dining Hall

The Dining Hall was remodelled during the Summer and now has an additional servery, extended dining area, covered waiting area, bigger kitchen, and a one-way system to ease congestion at peak times.

Tennis Courts

It had been hoped that the school could build a new tennis centre and planning permission had been granted for the development at the junction of Rocky Lane and Gatton Bottom. Sadly, the funding we had expected was not forthcoming so we have purchased tennis nets to be used on the astro turf. Lines have been drawn on the pitch and pupils can now play tennis during PE lessons or after school.



Pick-Up Point

With increased pupil numbers we need to constantly review the way traffic comes onto the site in order to ensure that pupils are not put in unnecessary danger. In 2011 we relaid the main school car park to allow for parking for more cars and at the same time we installed a pick-up point for parents to collect their children. This has been very well received by parents and has reduced the number of cars that drive further onto the site.

Stables

Over the last few years it had become increasingly apparent that the riding stables near the Bothy were at the end of their useful life. The horse boxes could not accommodate the 20 horses that are needed for riding lessons and BTEC curriculum. Aside from lack of space, the facilities in the old riding school were inadequate and beyond repair. It had got to the point where the old riding school was no longer viable and the only two options were closure or to rebuild the riding school.



In the Summer of 2011 the decision was made to invest in a new riding school. The building project was completed in June 2012 and it includes new stables and an outdoor sand school. The stables are located between the indoor riding school and the new sand school and the whole complex is located in a quiet part of Gatton Park next to the Walled Garden.



... *Building update continued.*

The stable building houses 20 horse boxes, tack room, feed store, locker room for riders' belongings, office, store rooms, kitchen and toilet. The state-of-the-art building will enable the School not only to offer excellent riding facilities for pupils, but also to offer riding courses during the holidays.

This school is one of the few that offers BTEC Horse Care for 14-16 year olds and BTEC Horse Management for post 16 pupils. The demands of these courses, together with riding lessons for pupils, means that the 20 resident horses are fully utilised during term time. It is noticeable that some of our Foundationers are the ones who seem to gain the most from their experience with horses.

Sport

In the last few years we have invested in new and upgraded sports facilities for pupils. The all-weather floodlit Astroturf and netball courts that opened in 2009 are fully utilised during the school day and for after school activities. Hockey has been introduced to the curriculum now that we have an Astroturf, and we have started to enter teams in the local schools hockey leagues.



The School has enjoyed particular success this year in netball and rugby. The Year 7 netball team came top of the Surrey Schools League for 2011-12 beating off strong competition from other local schools.

The Year 10 rugby team made history this year when they played in the Final of the Surrey Schools Cup Competition against Richard Challoner School, a catholic comprehensive school for boys. Challoner had a slight weight and height advantage but, after a thrilling / nail-biting match it ended in a draw. In such a situation the winner is the team which scored the most tries. Both had scored three! The next decider was the number of converted tries and, again, the teams were equal so, for the first time in the competition's history, the two schools were declared joint winners. The Year 8 rugby team,



who won the Surrey School League last year when they were in Year 7, narrowly missed victory this year but achieved a creditable second place when they were defeated by Imber Court School in Esher with a score of 10-13.

Our Year 8, Year 9, Year 10 and Year 11 Rugby teams won the Surrey Schools League in 2012 and this follows on from wins for the Year 8, Year 10 and Year 11 teams last year.

Teams have been entered in leagues for many sports this year including Cross Country, Rounders, Hockey, Basketball, Lacrosse, Football, Swimming and Table Tennis. We have also entered teams for equestrian events and the school team qualified for the National Schools Show Jumping Championships in October 2012. Our Mountain Biking team enjoyed similar success by winning the Surrey School Mountain Biking title for the second year in a row. In the District Athletics Championships our Year 10 and 11 pupils won the Intermediate Girls and Intermediate Boys titles.

The School's ability to teach cricket was limited by the condition of the cricket pitch which was waterlogged in places for much of the summer term in 2012. The pitch needs to be levelled and have drainage improved so one of the next capital projects will be to complete this work.

The Foundation

Comments from Chairman Graham Williams

From its origin as two orphanages, this school carries forward its principles of helping disadvantaged youngsters by offering around 80 'Foundation' places. These free boarding places are offered to children whose home circumstances make a boarding education desirable. We work very hard to secure funding from other charities but the amount of funding required from the Foundation to keep these children in boarding has doubled from £192,000 in 2007/8 to £412,000 in 2011/12.

The Foundation is of the view that Foundationers should enjoy the same school experience as their peers and this means providing extracurricular activities as well as fees. Therefore, the School's Foundation not only covers school fees for Foundationers, but also the costs of some school trips, uniform, music lessons and riding lessons.

Poor investment performance in recent years has meant that charities have less money available to support Foundationers so the burden on the School has become greater. The Trustees' sound financial management, and efforts to raise funds from lettings have helped the Foundation to maintain its support for Foundationers but plans to increase the number of Foundationers are now under threat. The Board of Management continues to seek additional sources of funding so that more vulnerable children can benefit from the stability that boarding education can provide. All donations are welcome.

