



## **Start of Term Letter Michaelmas 2023**

August 2023

Dear parent or guardian,

It seems no time since I sat in my office being lambasted by loud music as pupils enjoyed the activities of our Fun Day at the end of Trinity Term 2023. It was great to see young people and their teachers enjoying themselves after a busy academic year. I'd like to place on record my thanks to our staff for all they do day-in-day-out to develop our young people and give them a meaningful school experience. I also want to express my thanks to all our parents for their help, support and feedback throughout the last year. Finally, thanks are due to our pupils who are magnificent and are the reason we come to work.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw a number of things to your attention about the year ahead.

### **Speech Night**

An early highlight of the academic year is Speech Night which as tradition dictates will be held in St Mark's Parish Church, Armagh. This year it will be held on 21 September and the Chief Guest will be renowned Old Armachian Professor John Lennox <https://www.johnlennox.org/>. All members of the school community are welcome to attend Speech Night, but it is particularly special for leavers to come back and celebrate their success.

### **Attendance**

Thank you for your cooperation last year as we all got used to the new text alert system for absence. Research indicates that regular attendance contributes to higher levels of attainment in external examinations. Please continue to support good attendance by scheduling appoints after school hours if possible, and trying to avoid taking holidays in term time.

While we are delighted to be a school which provides lots of opportunities for activities outside the classroom, we would stress that a strategic approach needs to be taken as families consider what trips and visits their children should go on. This can ensure that a healthy balance is maintained between availing of opportunities and being in class.

## **Coronation Service**

We were delighted by the attendance at the service to celebrate the coronation of their majesties King Charles and Queen Camilla last May. At a service a special offering was taken for Reach Mentoring.

## **Home/ School Communication**

Effective communication remains a priority for us. While there are regular parent teacher meetings across the year, we understand that there may be other occasions when you will want to speak to staff. You will always be welcome at school.

To ensure that the member of staff you need to speak to is available and in possession of the information they may need for your meeting please ring ahead to make an appointment.

If you ring to speak with a member of staff, please bear in mind that the bulk of a teacher's day is spent in the classroom with pupils, and it may not be possible for your call to be returned that day. When you ring, please be prepared to provide reception staff with some basic information such as:

- *Your full name.*
- *The nature of your inquiry.*
- *The telephone number you would like to be reached at if you require a call back.*

Please do not ask for an urgent call back unless the matter is actually urgent, as in time sensitive. If you wish to inform us about a safeguarding concern an appointment is **not** necessary.

## **Staff leavers, new staff appointments**

We are very grateful for the service of all members of staff over the last year. In particular, we convey our best wishes to those who are not returning in the 2023/24 academic year.

### **Leavers:**

- Mrs F Millar (after 31 years' service)
- Mrs B Fitch
- Mr D McElhatton
- Mrs R McArdle
- Miss R Bridge
- Mrs E Bihel

### **New appointees:**

We are delighted to welcome new colleagues to school, and we wish them a happy and successful time at RSA.

- Mrs S Hughes (Geography and Travel & Tourism)
- Mrs R Belshaw (Part time, French and English)
- Mrs E Weir (Part time, French & English)

## Issue of results

Results dates are: **AS and A Level: Thursday 17 August**  
**GCSE: Thursday 24 August**

Pupils awaiting AS and A Level results can access them remotely.

**A Level results:** School will be open from 08:30 to pupils who want to call and of course anyone who requires advice or assistance will be very welcome. More specific information about the day will be posted as a reminder on social media in mid August.

**AS results:** Year 13 pupils moving into Year 14 should call at school between 10:00 and 12:00 in order to confirm subject choices. Pupils who do not need to drop a subject and do not require assistance with an issue do not have to attend school. Pupils who are unable to call but who wish to drop a subject should telephone school with their information.

Pupils getting GCSE results will be advised of a time slot to come to school and collect their results and staff will be on hand to deal with any issues or queries. At this point they may also confirm subject choices.

Please be mindful that results days are very busy in school and results cannot ordinarily be given over the phone.

## Start Dates & Phased Return

There will be some induction sessions at the start of the term and a phased return for pupils as detailed below. Full uniform should be worn to induction sessions.

Date	Year Group	Time	Venue
Thursday 24 August	Year 11	08:50 - 12:20*	Reid Hall
Friday 25 August	Year 8 Year 14	08:50 - 15:15 08:50 – 12:20***	Reid Hall **
<b>Monday 28 August</b>	<b>Bank holiday</b>	<b>No pupils</b>	
Tuesday 29 August	All year groups (except Year 13)	08:50 -15:15	See notices for locations
Wednesday 30 August	All year groups Year 13	08:50 - 15:15 08:50 – 15:15	From Class Marquee

\* Please note originally Year 11 were told they would be in for a whole day. This is not now possible.

\*\*Prefects will be on site to help guide new Year 8 pupils to the Reid Hall. We would advise parents that it is better if pupils are not accompanied by their parents into the school grounds.

\*\*\* Interviews will be held in the afternoon for Year 14 pupils who will be notified in advance.

**All pupils are scheduled to be in school on Wednesday 30 August.** Notices will be posted at the entrances and on school social media advising pupils of the room they need to go to.

## Bus Passes and Transport Claims

Home to school transport assistance must be applied for through the Education Authority (EA) online application process. Please note the school is not involved in this process and has no involvement in the granting of transport assistance. Further information on eligibility for transport assistance and how to apply can be found on the Education Authority website at the following link: [www.eani.org.uk/transport](http://www.eani.org.uk/transport). Assistance with information about bus transport may be obtained from the Concourse Office.

**Please note:** Ulsterbus will not provide school transport services until Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September.

## School uniform

Governors wish me to stress the importance of maintaining the high standards we would expect of a Royal School pupil. These standards have not changed and parents who send their children here are assumed to have accepted these standards. Pupils who infringe the appearance code will be liable to sanction. Therefore, we ask for your particular assistance in ensuring the following in line with the appearance code:

- *Skirts* – worn no higher than the knee and not ‘rolled up’. Please take time over the next few weeks to make sure that skirts are compliant with school regulations, these have not changed in recent years and therefore we ask for continued cooperation. Skirts which are not compliant with the appearance code will have to be replaced.
- *Hair* – tidy style, a natural colour with the avoidance of ‘extremes’ in style. Boys’ hair should not be worn lower than collar length. Boys should not have shaved heads or very short cuts e.g., ‘number 1’.
- *Make up* – this must be discreet – if it can be easily seen its not discreet enough and pupils are liable to be asked to remove it.
- *Shoes* – plain black leather only, no trainers, girls’ shoes must have low heels.
- *Piercings* – one stud only may be worn in each ear by girls only.
- *Nail varnish* – permitted in subdued/neutral colours only.
- *Gel nails etc.* – these are not permitted.
- *Hoodies* – only the official school hoodie may be worn under blazers to and from school in periods of cold weather and only as part of the full uniform. They may not be worn in corridors unless as part of the official PE uniform.

While we are pleased that each year a number of teams or trips produce tops with the school crest or team name as a memento of pupil involvement these tops are not part of the school uniform and may not be worn as such.

- Pupils must change back into their full uniform after games classes before leaving the school grounds.

Further information about appearance, including information about hairstyles, is contained in the Parents’ Handbook.

## **School Shop**

Items of uniform may be purchased from the school shop. Throughout the summer it will be open each day from 9am to 4:30pm (Closed for lunch 12:30pm to 1pm). Advice will be offered in the shop regarding the appropriate length of the school skirt.

## **Lunchtime**

- We will operate a service in the Dining Hall from 25 August. We expect that there will be a limited selection to begin with until we establish demand.
- As you would expect vegetarian, gluten free and halal options (where requested) will be available from 25 August.
- The biometric (fingerprint) payment system will be used.
- We regret that it will not be possible to provide food to a pupil who has no credit on their account. It is vital that parents and pupils ensure they have sufficient credit in their account to ensure they can avail of a healthy meal.
- Sixth Form pupils may leave the school grounds at lunch time in line with conditions which have been explained to them, they may not use their cars at lunchtime.

## **Stationery**

At the start of the year pupils will be given some stationery to help organise their resources. After that it is essential that pupils attend school fully resourced with their own pens, pencil case, colouring pencils, glue, sellotape, art equipment and calculators etc. Some items of stationery can be purchased in the school shop.

## **After School hours**

For insurance purposes I must ask that all day pupils, who are not participating in supervised activities after school, leave the grounds by 3:30pm. Any pupil who encounters difficulty getting home should report to either of the vice principals or to me.

## **Car park**

To ensure the safety of everyone using the school site only pupils in the Preparatory Department may be dropped off or collected in the grounds. The exception to this is in cases where a pupil has mobility issues which should be discussed with Mr Hooks.

Parking on the school site is limited to staff and visitors only. Pupils are not permitted to park in the school grounds. The Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (AOP) advise us that their car parks are provided for patrons and guests of the AOP only.

We have received a number of complaints from local residents about parking, including cars parked in a manner which prevented disabled access by residents. I would ask that pupils who are fortunate enough to have their own car to bring to school show courtesy to local residents and also arrive to school in time to get parked and be at registration punctually.

## **Kirkland Rowell Survey**

Thank you to everyone who took time to complete this survey, your input will be vital as we prepare to publish a new School Development Plan for 2023-2026 during the Michaelmas term 2023.

## **Relationships & Sexuality Education**

I am conscious that there has been some coverage of this in the media and ahead of the start of term I thought it best to clarify some things. RSE is a long-established part of the curriculum in Northern Ireland's schools. The Royal School has an RSE Policy and RSE is taught in a manner consistent with our objectives as an educator and the school's mission statement and ethos. In response to the publication in 2019 of a report by the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland laid regulations in the Westminster Parliament to amend the Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 to add additional topics to the RSE curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. Specifically the legislation requires that, *"the curriculum for every grant aided school shall, in relation to key stages 3 and 4 include age appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion"*. Although these new regulations came into force on 1 July 2023 the Department of Education has told schools that there is no expectation that there will be any changes to the taught programme until it issues guidance and support materials in January 2024. In the interim the department has updated its website to reflect these developments (<https://www.education-ni.gov/articles/relationship-and-sexuality-education-rse>) and will be conducting a public consultation. I would encourage anyone who is interested to make a response to the consultation once it is launched.

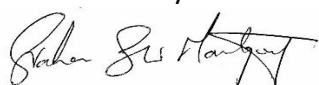
## **Building works**

Work has continued throughout the summer on several sites within the grounds. This is important disability access work which will enhance the buildings and promote inclusiveness. We appreciate everyone's patience as these works are completed.

## **And finally....**

It takes a community to make a school successful and on behalf of the Governors and our Staff I would like to thank you for your support last year and pay tribute to your children whose contribution to school life is highly valued. Best wishes to those awaiting results. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Yours faithfully



Graham Montgomery

**Headmaster**