



Richmond Park
Academy
To make our best better

**NEWS & VIEWS FOR
OUR COMMUNITY**

Autumn 2015



In this issue:

- GCSE results PAGE 7
- Understanding the new grading system PAGE 6
- RPA victorious in Battle of the Books PAGE 5





Park Life is Richmond Park Academy's termly magazine. It aims to keep our local community updated on some of our achievements and activities, as well as providing some insight into life at RPA.

We are exceptionally proud of our students and the high standard of teaching and learning at our academy, and we would like to share this with you through this publication.



Richmond Park Academy
Park Avenue
East Sheen
London SW14 8RG
Telephone: 020 8876 8891
Email: contactus@richmondparkacademy.org
www.richmondparkacademy.org
Facebook: /RichmondParkAcademy
Twitter: @richmondparkac

Headteacher Highlights

Welcome to our first *Park Life* edition of the new academic year. I am looking forward to another exciting and successful three terms, packed with experiences to enhance and extend the learning and living of our students (and staff).



Last year we had much to celebrate: some significant exam increases; the completion of our building programme; a full Year 7; a visit from, among others, Dame Jacqueline Wilson (who described RPA as the nicest school she had ever visited); a plethora of activities from cycling to sailing and kitchen gardening to *Alice in Wonderland*. We believe the opportunity to visit as many places as possible is an integral part of a child's experience and I was, as ever, overwhelmed by the final list of visits which ranged from Barcelona to the Bank of England – by way of the *Lion King* and the New Forest.

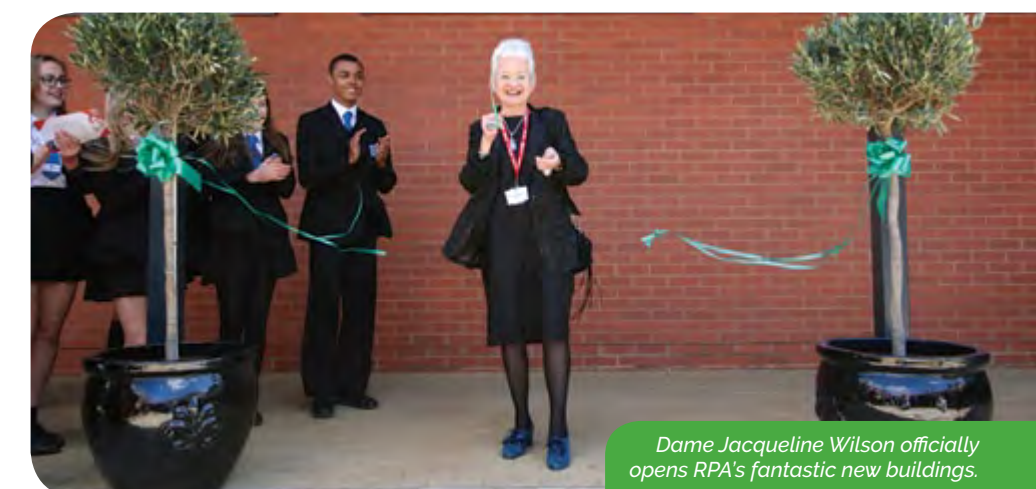
Many students made superb progress this year, in all year groups, and we are of course going to be as demanding as ever of our learners; possibly even more so this year. Work set can be found on *Show My Homework* as well as *Google Classroom* so parents/carers can see what is being taught and learnt by your children. Please also keep an eye on your child's Vivo rewards points tally.

I am delighted to be able to tell you that we start the year fully staffed, so your child may have a different form tutor or co tutor. The list of teachers will soon be on the website. As well as the Year Leader and form tutors, parents/carers should be aware that each year group has a Progress Leader who will be scrutinising your child's test outcomes and ensuring that s/he is making good or better progress. The Progress Leaders this year are: Mr Cook (Years 10 & 11); Ms Durling (Years 8 & 9); and Mr Costello (Year 7). They work with the teachers and pastoral teams to ensure that children are enabled to meet their academic potential so that they leave us at the end of Year 11, 12 or 13 as accomplished young citizens of the 21st century, well prepared for the future – whatever it may hold.

I wish all RPA students, parents, carers and staff a happy and successful 2015-16.

Lesley Kirby

Lesley Kirby



Dame Jacqueline Wilson officially opens RPA's fantastic new buildings.

Be inspired!

RPA student shortlisted as Student of the Year

RPA's own Fred Beatty has been shortlisted for the main award in the inaugural Student of the Year Awards.



The awards, supported by the Department for Education, Department for Business Innovation & Skills, Mayor of London, AoC, CBI, IoD and British Chambers of Commerce, aims to put the spotlight on the most inspirational students across the UK. There is no doubt that Fred falls into that category. As well as being an exceptional rower he achieved an impressive 12 A/A* at GCSE whilst also fulfilling his duties as Head Boy, an elected position voted for by his peers. As nominating teacher for the awards, Mr Doy, said, "...it is not one attribute but his combined characteristics that make him such an incredible and unique student."

The awards ceremony will take place on Friday 25th September in Central London. Keep an eye on the RPA website for an update. Good luck Fred!

New broom in the science room

Richmond Park Academy has just taken a new scientist on board, one who has no hesitation in admitting that he is in love with teaching. But Chris Trace, graduate of St Mary's College, Twickenham, is also passionate about rugby – and it was his desire to continue playing his favourite game in an inter-varsity league which led him into the classroom.

Mr Trace admits: "When I got my degree in Sports Science and English, I was initially considering a career as a physical education officer in the Royal Air Force for which I needed a teaching qualification. I had enjoyed my time at St Mary's and was, frankly, in no hurry to leave. To play in the rugby European Championships I had to be a student and, when I was selected, I used that as an excuse to remain a student for a bit longer. But then St Mary's made me an offer I couldn't refuse – to do a PGCE with them – a life-changing offer, as it turned out. That's when I discovered that I wanted to be a teacher – and wanted nothing else."

After becoming Head of Year in his previous school and being officially recognised as an Advanced Skills Teacher he was ready for a new challenge. "I was picking up vibes that RPA was definitely going places. I wanted to be involved in that journey,

so when I saw the job advertised, I grabbed the opportunity."

Now that he is a member of staff, did what he was seeing inside reflect what he had heard from the outside? "Well, just look at my lab, for a start. The refit is superb. I have movable tables – a new initiative in school science room design – and it's loaded with excellent equipment. Another thing which impresses me is the positive attitude of the staff here and the drive towards consistency, which is so important for progress. To help us to keep tabs on what's happening, there's a new innovative link between year leaders and recently appointed progress leaders which is excellent."

Why does Mr Trace find teaching so exciting? "It's all to do with the 'ah' factor," he explains. "Telling the students something they don't know and hearing the 'ah' of understanding is just magic."



And the winners are...

RPA win Battle of the Books for the first time

At the end of last term, RPA, for the very first time, won the prestigious Y8 Battle of the Books against tough borough secondary competition. The competition which has been running for over a decade featured questions, set by Richmond's dedicated librarians, based on a reading list of six pre-selected titles covering a comprehensive range of subject themes – thriller, fantasy, history, mystery and family.

During a break in the competition author Catherine Bruton, one of whose books was on the pre-selected list, talked to the students about writing as a skill. She shared the hows, whens and whys of her craft with her audience, several of whom had already tested the story-writing water for themselves.

This is a well deserved achievement for our Y8's and the committed library and English department who supported them. Huge congratulations to the talented students who got us over the finishing line – Mia, Ellie, Isobel, Elijah, Sydney, Amira, Robert and Millie.

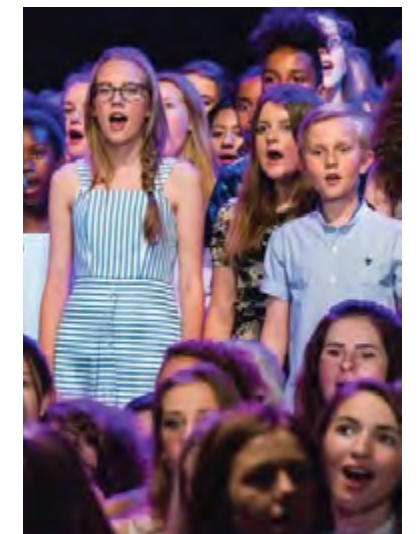


Alice in Wonderland

RPA's own theatre impresario, Mr Walker, staged five performances of *Alice in Wonderland* complete with "eat me" biscuits and catering from the PTA. According to Mr Walker the whole cast worked together beautifully to deliver an ambitious performance. Special mentions to the two Alices, Orina and Lilly, and the fantastic Stage Manager, Shannon.

Live @ The Rose

RPA are very proud of their incredibly versatile choir and nowhere was that versatility more in evidence than at their Live @ The Rose performance last term. Live @The Rose at The Rose Theatre in Kingston is an annual event organised by Richmond Music Trust that RPA choir participate in. All Richmond borough secondary schools take part to form a super choir, performing four main songs led by soloists (one of whom was our very own Joeliza singing *Footprints in the Sand*). The RPA choir also sang as a group, performing *Time of My Life* and *I Gotta Feeling*. This was a unique 'mashup' of the two songs organised by Ms Fairbairn in a six-part harmony.



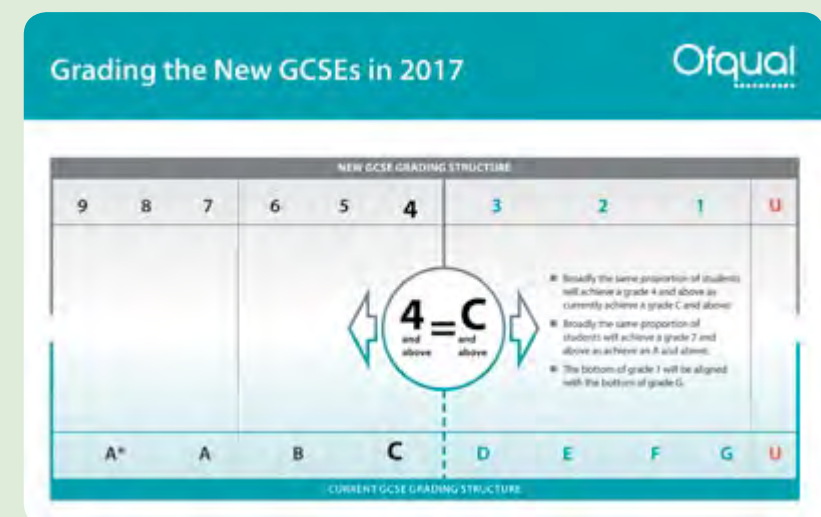
RPA were also incredibly proud of a small group of soloists including Mia singing *Happy Endings* (accompanied by Izzy, Florence and Millie, all in Year 8). Charli performed a self penned piece from her Disney inspired musical *Switch*. We were also thrilled with Tom, Ruby and Tess from Year 7 who sang *Thinking Out Loud* by Ed Sheeran.

Everyone filled the stage with talent and enthusiasm!

All change! Out with A - C and in with 1 - 9

It is all change for our students from this September as the Government implements a new grading strategy, starting with English Language, English Literature and Maths GCSE's. The marking changes will be seen for the first time in 2017 exams with RPA students getting used to the new grading from this September.

GCSEs will be graded 1 to 9, with 9 being the top grade. According to Ofqual Grade 5 will be broadly in line with what the best evidence tells them is the average performance in high performing countries such as Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland. It will effectively straddle the current Grade C and Grade B with the bottom half of grade B and top half of Grade C now amalgamated into the new Level 5. The Ofqual expectation is that broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a Grade C. The same proportion of students will achieve Grade 7 and above as achieve a Grade A with 20% of those achieving the highest performing grade 9.



How is RPA incorporating these changes into its planning?

In addition to the new numerical GCSE system, the government will judge schools against a number of measures including Progress 8 which is the progress made in the child's best eight subjects at GCSEs against the starting point of Year 6 test results. RPA staff are aligning their curricula with the new assessment system – 'Doddle' – that we will be using in Years 7-9. Doddle is a quick, easy and personalised system for assessing and measuring progress. The progress reporting system in Doddle gives a consistent assessment framework across the school and powerful, meaningful reporting for staff and parents/carers. More information will be available as we roll the system out this year.

We hope to be able to allow parents to have their own direct log-in to access a student's report at key points during the year.

It's all about the standards...

RPA has a very robust whole school improvement plan. As with all good plans it is constantly reviewed and revised. As part of that review last year marking was identified as an area for improvement and it continues to feature strongly as a priority as we enter the new academic year.



Firstly, what is good practice? We asked Ms O'Brien, Senior Vice Principal and member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to explain: "Marking is valuable where it helps a student make progress. It is good for a learner to recognise where they have done well and where such an approach should be repeated. It is most useful where it identifies the next step for a learner to make even further progress."

As part of this ongoing initiative the SLT manage a weekly marking time-table where books are monitored by subject leaders and a member of the SLT. This process ensures that all teachers are consistent in their marking and that they check that each student has responded appropriately to any comments and suggestions made.

The final word goes to Ms O'Brien, "I have already seen real results in student response, the quality of marking and the consistency of that marking, which continues to improve. However, this is an ongoing initiative and we will continue to push hard to ensure that we get the best out of all of our teachers and they get the very best out of their students".

RPA's Y11's make the grade

There are many things that make a good school: ethos, extracurricular activity, quality teaching – and results, from the standard measure of A* - C through to levels of improvement. RPA are very proud of its 2015 Y11 cohort who achieved the successes that their efforts deserved.

This latest set of GCSE exam results (5A*C with maths and English) have improved by 10% and our English baccalaureate outcomes (for students sitting English, maths, two sciences, history or geography and a modern language) doubled. Subjects where more than 80% of entrants scored over A* - C include history, geography, psychology, religious studies, biology, chemistry, Spanish and music, and they all substantially exceed the national average for 2014 (2015 results are not available but are reputed to be similar to last year).

There was an unprecedented number of students achieving five or more A*/A's with some outstanding personal achievements recorded. For example, 11 A*/As by Rose S; twins Mahmood and Mustafa scooping 13 A*/As between them; Sophie and fellow classmate Ellen each gaining 9 A*/As. Sophie – who moved into the 6th Form Experience at RPA this September, applauded the support given to her by her

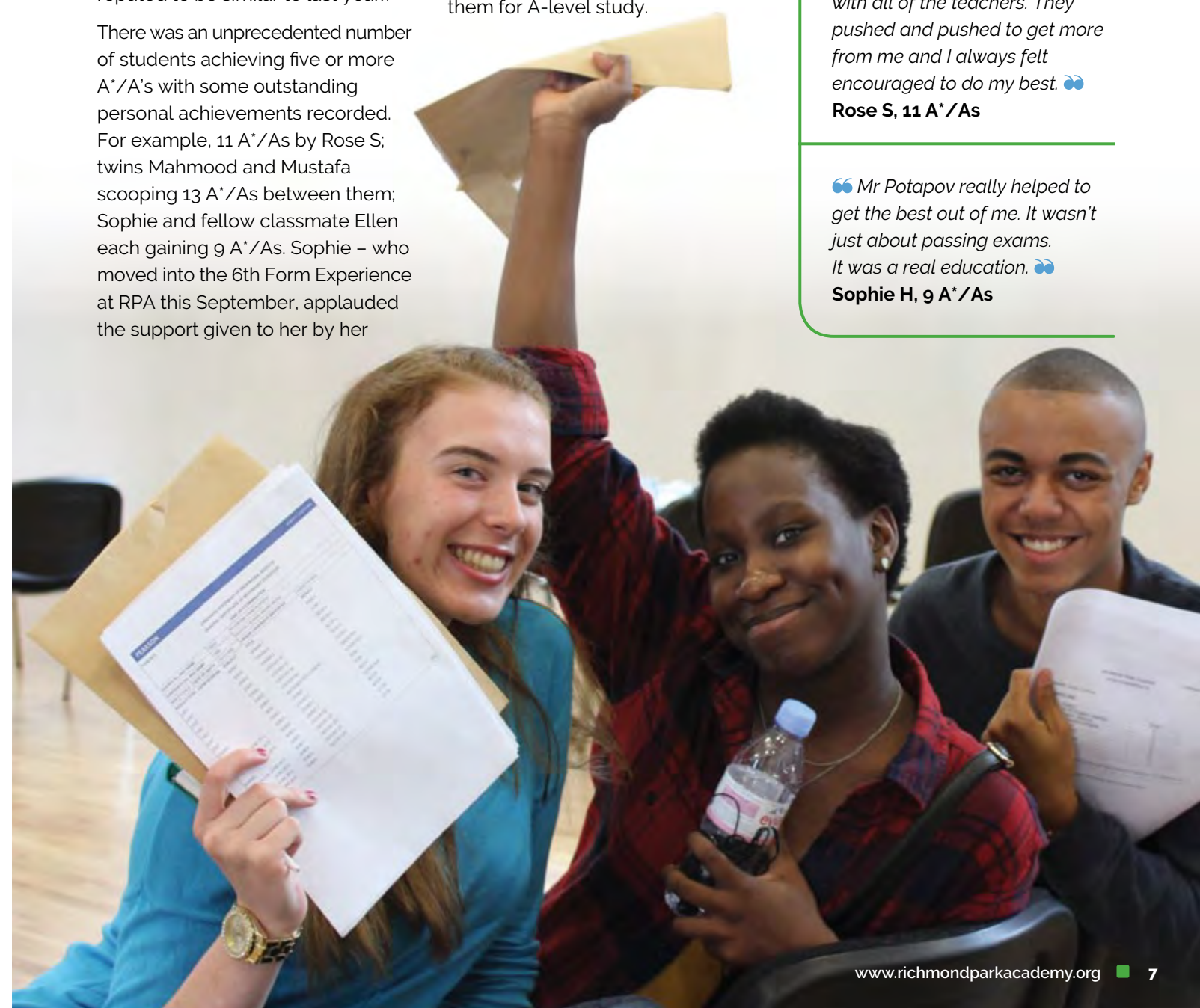
teachers as she worked towards her GCSEs, particularly from English teacher Mr Potapov. Mr Cook, history teacher *extraordinaire*, was also mentioned in dispatches by Ellen, who said 'his encouragement throughout her five years at RPA had made a huge difference.'

Many of the 6th Form Experience students – one year into their subject courses – also performed well, attracting the attention of many of the academy's high-achieving GCSE students who have decided to join them for A-level study.

“These are results to be proud of. Students and staff should be congratulated for the tremendous work they put in to secure some outstanding outcomes. Everyone at RPA remains committed to building on this year and ensuring that all of our students reach their potential in the years to come.”
Lesley Kirby

“I had an amazing relationship with all of the teachers. They pushed and pushed to get more from me and I always felt encouraged to do my best.”
Rose S, 11 A*/As

“Mr Potapov really helped to get the best out of me. It wasn't just about passing exams. It was a real education.”
Sophie H, 9 A*/As



Sports Report

So, how has RPA done this year? Performance was strong across all sports with a significant number of 2nd places and a smattering of borough champions. View the table below to see how many sports RPA participate in and how we are doing.

There have been some amazing experiences enjoyed by our students in the last year including cycling with Dame Sarah Storey, Schools Cycling Festival at Lee Valley VeloPark, Schools Mountain Bike Festival at Hadleigh Park, Schools Whitewater Rafting Festival at Lee Valley Whitewater Centre, professional Table Tennis coaching from York Gardens Table Tennis Club at RPA, British Grass Track Cycling coaching at RPA, Richmond Knights Basketball Coaching, Squash at Sheen Lawn Tennis Club and Basketball National Grand Final trip to the O2.



Boys Football

Y7 South Richmond Champions ● & Richmond Grand Finalist (Runner up) ●
Y7 Surrey Cup R2
Y7 National Cup R2
Y8 3rd Richmond Championship ●
Y8 Surrey Cup R1
Y8 National Cup R2
Y9 Joint 2nd in Richmond Premiership ●
Y9 Surrey Cup R3
Y9 National Cup R1
Y10 Joint top Richmond Premiership ● (missed out on Grand Final on goal difference 3rd overall)
Y10 Surrey Cup R2
Y10 National Cup R2
Y11 3rd Richmond Premiership ●
Y11 Surrey Cup R2
Y11 National Cup R1

Girls Football

Y7&8 Joint 2nd South Richmond ●
Y7 5th Brentford FC Football
Y8 6th Brentford FC Football

Boys 5-a-side Football

Y10 Runner up Chessington ●
Y12 South Richmond Champions ●

Boys Rugby Union

Y7 3rd Richmond Borough League ●
Y8 3rd South Richmond ●
Y10 3rd Richmond Borough League ●

Girls U13 School Games Rugby Union
4th SW London

Boys Rugby League

Y7 3rd Richmond ●
Y9 Runner up Richmond ●
Y10 Runner up Richmond ●
Y11 Runner up Richmond ●

Girls Rugby League

Y7 Runner up Richmond ●
Y7 London Regional Champions ●
Y7 7th National Finals
Y8 4th Richmond
Y9 3rd Richmond ●
Y9 3rd London Regional ●

Boys Basketball

U16 School Games 5th Richmond
Y7 Runner up Richmond ●
Y8&9 Richmond Champions ●
Y10&11 Runner up Richmond ●

Girls Basketball

U16 School Games Runner up Richmond
Y7 6th Richmond
Y8&9 4th Richmond
Y10&11 Runner up Richmond ●

Girls Hockey League

Y7 Runner up Richmond ●
Y8&9 3rd Richmond ●

Boys Table Tennis

Y12 2nd South Richmond ●

Girls Table Tennis

KS3 Runner up Richmond ●
KS4 Richmond Champions ●
KS4 3rd South London Finals ●

Boys Cricket

Y7&8 3rd South Richmond ●
Y9&10 Runner up Richmond ●

Cross Country

Y7 Boys 10th Richmond
Y8&9 Boys 7th Richmond
Y7 Girls 5th Richmond
Y8&9 Girls 8th Richmond

Volleyball School Games

Y10 Boys Runner up Richmond ●
Y10 Girls Runner up Richmond ●

Girls Netball League

Y7 4th
Y8 6th
Y10&11 4th

Girls Netball Festivals

Y7 3rd overall ●
Y8 5th overall
Y7&8 2nd overall ●
Y9&10 3rd overall ●

Girls Rounders Festival

Y8 4th over all

Cycling

Y7&8 Runner up Richmond ●

Borough Athletics

Y8 Joel F 200m Richmond Champion ●

Boys Tennis

Y12 Richmond Champions ●

KEY: ● 1st place, ● 2nd place, ● 3rd place

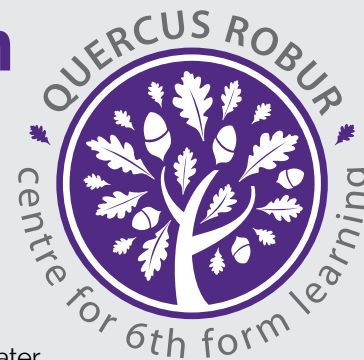
Trips, trips and more trips!

RPA students (and teachers!) enjoyed a multitude of diverse trips in the last calendar year. If education is about extending experience and opening up possibilities then RPA students are in good shape for the future!

Nearly 40 trips were organised in the last academic year – and that was only the paid for ones. There were a whole range of other free trips and experiences covered within the time-table. There are already six trips planned for this academic year as *Park Life* goes to press.



The 6th form experience



Life in the 6th form has been busy! With our Y13 students and an influx of new Y12 students we now have a complete 6th form which is dynamic, exciting and challenging, bringing greater freedom and independence for our 6th formers.

With the recent launch of our 6th form centre – **Quercus Robur** – students can enjoy working in silent study, relaxing in the common room or chilling in the atrium.

In our first year at RPA we are very confident that we have achieved a very special, well rounded educational 6th form experience. Combined with a fantastic range of extra-curricular activities designed to build crucial teamwork skills, community and communication knowledge our students have already cemented the foundation skills needed to succeed in higher education or in the workplace.

Students have been able to choose from an increased choice of A Levels this year:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Art | ■ French | ■ Philosophy & Ethics |
| ■ Biology | ■ Further Mathematics | ■ Physics |
| ■ Chemistry | ■ Geography | ■ Product Design |
| ■ Creative Writing | ■ History | ■ Psychology |
| ■ Economics | ■ Mathematics | ■ Spanish |
| ■ English Literature | ■ PE | |

With new BTEC courses added this year in Hospitality, Sports Science and Travel & Tourism our students have been able to combine A Levels with these options to complement their chosen university and career pathways.

If you are interested in joining RPA 6th form please contact a member of the 6th form team or email: enrol@richmondparkacademy.org



On behalf of the Governing Board

I hope you're enjoying this issue of *Park Life*. If you're looking to choose a secondary school for your child (a sometimes stressful task, I remember) you'll be reading it especially closely, and wanting to be confident of some important things: that your child will be happy and safe, and make great friends at Richmond Park Academy; that s/he'll do as well as s/he possibly can academically; that s/he'll have great, inspirational teachers here, and many opportunities for personal development beyond the classroom through fabulous sporting, cultural or creative activities. These are the things we would all wish for our children. Our job as governors is to make sure that the school excels in delivering them.

Your Governing Body is made up of people just like you – many of us parents with children at the school, or at local primaries. We live locally and want the very best for our children and our



community. We are here to both support and positively challenge the school leadership team and to build an outstanding academy on your doorstep.

I hope what you're reading in these few pages is already exciting you and your child about life at RPA. If you haven't already, do make time to come and visit us – not just at our Open Evening on September 22nd, but on a regular school day.

We look forward very much to welcoming you and your family into our school community.

David Heath
Chair of Governors

Forming a multi-academy trust?

At the time of writing, RPA's governing body continues to explore the possibilities of forming a community trust with some of our local primary schools.

This would be a big step for RPA, which as an Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) academy already enjoys many benefits as part of a national network of schools. On the other hand, working even more closely with some of our 'feeder' primary schools may offer us many exciting, new opportunities.

Along with their colleagues in primary schools, RPA governors will be soon be evaluating a draft proposal document on forming a 'multi-academy trust' (MAT) which, if approved, will be put to public consultation this Term.

We'll keep parents and prospective parents updated on the progress of discussions as they unfold.

A personal assessment

by former diplomat, Sir Roderic Lyne

Earlier this year Richmond Park Academy invited East Sheen resident Roderic Lyne – a former diplomat who, post retirement, was Chair of Governors at Kingston University – to take the Dimbleby role in the Academy's own version of the BBC's iconic Question Time. It was his first visit since his daughter was a pupil at the Academy's predecessor school over twenty years ago. In preparation, Senior Vice Principal Tracey O'Brien showed him around and introduced him to some of the 6th formers who would be in the audience.



– was also a personal eye-opener. "I've been to a lot of events in my time but seldom have I met more poised, confident young people. The relaxed articulation of the Head Boy and Head Girl's welcoming speeches was remarkable and the piano performance by young musician Charli Eglinton of her own composition had a definite 'wow' appeal. This struck me as a school where great young people were being encouraged to do interesting things and do them to a very high standard."

Roderic recalled, with some amusement, the moment when the fire alarm sounded. "Although it was probably not a scheduled fire drill, it couldn't have been better timed because it further underlined the confidence and competence of the students who very calmly ushered all the visitors to a safe muster point and kept them engaged in conversation until the 'all clear' was given."

It appears that this visiting diplomat was so impressed by what he had experienced that he accepted wholeheartedly the invitation to take part in discussions about a proposed 6th form mentoring scheme. He is now supporting Mary Jane Blease, Director of 6th form Studies, in a pilot project of one-to-one mentoring which has already attracted a large number of volunteers. Roderic says this indicates very clearly that the school – with "great staff and great students" – is rapidly moving upwards. "Our community has, for many years, benefited from vibrant primaries and it now has a secondary school doing the same thing, with a 6th form adding substance, scale and momentum to both students and staff."

Asked to describe the school he is now getting to know in a handful of words, Roderic responded "friendly, buzzing, upwardly mobile." That's a personal assessment for RPA to be proud of.

Had the school changed much since his last visit? Apparently it had. "There's been a dramatic improvement in the physical environment – and the brightness of classrooms and corridors particularly struck me," Roderic observed. "There's a lovely café open to all, a really striking, well stocked library, computer work stations everywhere and a real buzz to the whole campus."

Our visitor was also impressed by The Acorn, RPA's dedicated Year 7 learning space. "This transition area has been very well thought through. It is supporting those new from primary school to feel at home in this much larger environment and there's a real sense of enjoyment between staff and students."

Roderic's second visit – to the official opening of RPA's new campus



The PTA (parent teacher association) is a partnership between school and parents/carers, and is a vital part of school life. Come and join us! It is an opportunity for you to feel connected and involved with school and our monthly PTA meetings give you the chance to hear school progress and developments from the Head and Senior Leadership team.

This year we are fundraising for amplifiers for the music department, inspirational speakers for workshops and a telescope for the astronomy club – and that is just the top of the list! Our fundraising plays an important part in adding real value to the student experience.

A warm welcome to Richmond Park Academy on behalf of the PTA

How to join us

Come along to the first PTA meeting of the 2015/16 school year in the Oak Tree Café. Refreshments will be served from 6-6.30pm and the PTA formal meeting will be held from 6.30-7.30pm. All are welcome. Check the website for the date of next meeting. Alternatively contact the PTA Chair, Jane Terry at jane.hertfordavenue@gmail.com

The Committee

Chair PTA: Jane Terry

Co Chair: Judith Eglinton

Events (Social/Fundraising/Sponsorship): Lynn Dahri & Audra Woods

Secretary/school link: Kate Goater

Treasurer: Keith Simms

Events

We look forward to continue working with the team at Hampton's estate agents in East Sheen who are kindly supporting and sponsoring the RPA PTA.

October (date to be confirmed):
PARENTS vs TEACHERS QUIZ NIGHT

Only 100 places available, children welcome and a "movie creche" will be available for over 7s.

Saturday 5th December:
CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

A generous 25% of the sale of each tree sold will be donated to the school.

Saturday 5th December:
6th FORM SCHOOL FAYRE



Richmond Park Academy

To make our best better

Educational excellence on your doorstep



**RPA - an aspirational school
with outstanding ambitions**

Come and see for yourself

RPA OPEN EVENING

Tuesday 22nd September

6.15 pm to 8.30 pm

Or every Tuesday or Thursday in September
and October by appointment

"We absolutely made
the right choice to
send our daughter to
RPA – excellent
teaching, great
management and an
enthusiastic and caring
environment"



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t: 020 8876 8891