

School/College of the Year | Reigate Grammar School



REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL



About Reigate Grammar School

Reigate Grammar School is an independent, co-educational day school in Surrey. The school aims to provide an education which goes beyond qualifications, supporting children to become the best version of themselves and creating a community for life.

Founded in 1675, the school has a long history of providing education for children from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Since 2003, this work has been continued by the RGS Foundation. By maintaining connections to the wider Reigatian community and seeking philanthropic support, the Foundation's long-term aim is an Open Access vision in which any talented child can attend the school, no matter what their background.

What were Reigate Grammar School's winning activities in 2020-21?

Reigate Grammar School won School of the Year in recognition of a range of activities to widen access to the school and support its local community in 2020-21. Supported by the RGS Foundation's Changing Lives campaign, the school continued to provide full bursaries to around 20 per cent of its pupils. Additionally, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Foundation set up the Nightingale Fund. This provided bursaries for children of lower-paid NHS and frontline workers, and sixth-form bursaries for pupils from less advantaged SEBs seeking a career in medicine. Bursaries provided through the Nightingale Fund were available to pupils selected through the school's entrance exam and interview process.

Reigate Grammar also launched the #RGSWeCare campaign, which involved a range of activities to provide community-based support to those most in need during the pandemic. Pupils, staff and students donated food and clothes, delivered free school meals to families in need, donated laptops for use across the community, and offered company and practical help through a school newsletter.

What are Reigate Grammar School's key enabling factors to advance social mobility?

Committed, passionate leadership

Reigate Grammar's commitment to social mobility comes from the very top. From the school's headmaster, board of trustees and governing body to the head of the RGS Foundation, Reigate's leaders are passionate and driven to advance social mobility through education. This sets the tone and creates a sense of purpose within the school and the Foundation.

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Social mobility is part of our mission to change the world – we intervene now to help individual children, but we also want to inspire today's young people to go out and create a fairer world in the future.
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A 'call to arms' during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic presented unique challenges in 2020-21. Reigate Grammar's headmaster Shaun Fenton encouraged students to use the pandemic as an opportunity to put their values into practice and to make a difference for those from less advantaged backgrounds. This sense of rising to the occasion was a key driver across the school community, from current students, parents and staff who were galvanised to volunteer in the local community to former students and supporters who contributed to the Nightingale Fund.

What challenges has Reigate Grammar School faced on social mobility?

Reigate Grammar works hard to meet the needs of its students who come from less advantaged SEBs. This includes being sensitive to specific family circumstances, providing resources such as laptops and other devices to support online learning, and ensuring access to food. The school adopts a proactive approach to supporting students with the specific challenges they face, and also strives to create a cohesive environment where diversity in the school community is recognised and celebrated.

How does Reigate Grammar School measure social mobility success?

The school measures success through metrics such as the number of students from less advantaged SEBs who achieve better educational outcomes, go onto university and go into professions in which they are underrepresented. However, the school also values less measurable forms of success – such as engaging young people in outreach and community work to “plant the seeds” of social justice, fairness, participation and empowerment.

What next for Reigate Grammar on social mobility?

To promote social mobility and widen opportunities, Reigate Grammar will continue to provide education for children from less advantaged SEBs through its bursary schemes. The school will also continue to instil its students with core values such as fairness and justice, to inspire them to promote wider social change once they leave school. For the RGS Foundation, the long-term vision is to generate sufficient charitable funds to create an open access school, which can be attended by children from any background.

With thanks to Shaun Fenton (Headteacher, Reigate Grammar School) and Sean Davey (Head, RGS Foundation) who were interviewed for this case study.

**“
Social mobility needs to be at the heart of any school's purpose. We need to help children be well educated, not just well qualified.
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