

# Chinthurst School & RGS/RSM partnership

## Q&A for parents

### 1) **What is happening?**

For a secure and bright future, Chinthurst School is choosing to enter into a formal partnership with two local schools, Reigate St Mary's Preparatory and Choir School (RSM) and Reigate Grammar School (RGS), where RSM is already a successful prep school with its own ethos and identity.

### 2) **Is Chinthurst too different to join in partnership with RGS and RSM?**

Chinthurst is a much-loved school with a long tradition. We truly believe that Chinthurst parents and pupils can only gain from a partnership with these two well-established local schools which are also extremely successful. It's a great fit: like Chinthurst, RGS and RSM see that education is about far more than any league table. All three schools pride ourselves on providing a holistic education, full of drama, music, sport and a host of other enriching activities, which broaden horizons and enable our young people to enjoy their childhood and also achieve – and exceed – their potential so they are well prepared for adult life. That's a shared ethos across all three schools!

### 3) **Why is this of benefit to Chinthurst? What are the tangible benefits?**

We believe that the potential advantages for Chinthurst are considerable: Chinthurst can draw on the security, educational expertise and marketing capacity of RGS, RSM and more. This is a difficult time for smaller independent schools – that's a fact. We all think this partnership will give Chinthurst a secure future, which will in turn attract more pupils and enable a plan for a really exciting future. Chinthurst keeps its ethos and values, but becomes part of a big, very well established educational institution, providing support and advice where it's needed.

Chinthurst, RSM and RGS are all operated by Charitable Trusts. Through this partnership, Chinthurst is able to remain under the operation of a Charitable Trust which continues to be committed to reinvest in the schools and then provide the best educational standards possible.

Chinthurst children will also notice new opportunities and access to additional facilities through the links with RSM and RGS.

### 4) **Chinthurst parents like the school's ethos and values: will these be protected? Once we are subsumed by a much larger school, isn't this bound to change?**

Chinthurst will keep its own ethos and identity because it is a key strength of Chinthurst, and everyone wants to retain and support it. It is key to the school's future success.

The journey of RSM since it joined with RGS 12 years ago shows what an association with RGS can do. It has grown from a small school with an uncertain future to a thriving, oversubscribed school. RSM has retained its own ethos, its own name, its own head, uniform, site and more. This is the model for the partnership with Chinthurst.

This is what the Good Schools Guide says about RSM: *Rated 'excellent in all areas' at the last [ISI Inspection \(January 2016\)](#), the school combines the best elements of a traditional preparatory school with modern teaching and a happy atmosphere.*

**5) One of the things Chinthurst parents like is the small classes; is this likely to change?**

We know that the small classes are something Chinthurst parents particularly like and whilst they will grow a little as more students join the school the growth of the school will not be at the expense of pastoral care, excellent relationships and generous staff-pupil ratios. Like its ethos and values, the family culture where all children are well known and cared for is a key part of what Chinthurst is about.

**6) RGS is an academically selective school. Will selection be introduced at Chinthurst?**

No, Chinthurst has no plans to introduce academic selection.

**7) Will fees rise?**

There may be some measure of alignment with the RSM/RGS fee structure over time but they are not that different at the moment. In any event, fees depend on all manner of external forces, for example, the national economic climate and inflation.

As Chinthurst remains part of a Charitable Trust it has less pressure to increase fees than if it was operated by a commercial organisation.

**8) Will Chinthurst become a feeder school for RGS?**

Chinthurst will continue to be a feeder school for Epsom, St John's, CLFS and other senior schools, including RGS – so no change there. It is particularly important to everyone involved that excellent relationships with Epsom and St John's are maintained and strengthened. This new partnership means that preparation at Chinthurst for the various senior schools can now be even better and stronger; and for those parents who would like their children to attend RGS, that is now an additional option. Chinthurst remains committed to helping children move to the right senior school for them. Epsom and St John's and other schools remain very good options.

**9) There is a new Headteacher; does that mean that the governing body will also be replaced?**

Mrs Hulme, Chair of Governors at Chinthurst since 2014, has been a key architect in the new model that has the support of the Chinthurst Board. There will be a new governing body for Chinthurst combining some of the governors currently on the Chinthurst Board with the RGS and RSM Board.

- Maxine Hulme and Lisa Page will remain on the Chinthurst Board whilst also joining the RGS board.
- Marc Benton, a former Chinthurst pupil, and David Adams, two current RGS governors, will join the Chinthurst board in addition to their role as RGS governors. Marc will chair the new Chinthurst board of governors.
- Two former RGS governors, Alan Walker and Jane Forbat will join the Chinthurst board.

**10) Why is Mr Tim Button leaving?**

Mr Button is a popular and highly respected Headteacher. He has worked incredibly hard in leading the turnaround of Chinthurst. Having served Chinthurst for over 32 years Mr Button felt that the time was right to take the opportunity offered by the new partnership to step down and let a new head be appointed for the longer term. He will support Miss Trundle, staff, parents and pupils of Chinthurst ensure that the transition period is a success.

**11) And what about current teaching staff?**

They will remain in place.

## **12) What does this mean for the local residents of Chinthurst?**

The partnership with RGS secures the long-term future of Chinthurst as a school operated by a Charitable Trust. We understand that residents in the area have been concerned following the recent purchase of Bramley, Priory and Greenacre and the likely building work to be undertaken on their sites. As RGS is a Charitable Trust local residents can be reassured that the Chinthurst site will remain as a school and community facility.

## **13) Why has this happened so quickly?**

The Board of Chinthurst has enjoyed a good relationship with a number of senior schools including RGS. Mr Shaun Fenton spoke at the last Chinthurst Speech Day and subsequently Dr Brendan Stones of RGS Deputy Head was invited to join masters from St John's and Epsom College on the Chinthurst Board of Governors. Whilst informal discussions about closer links between RSM and RGS had been taking place for some time, it was the acquisition of Bramley, Priory and Greenacre schools which led the two Boards (RGS and Chinthurst) to act quickly. It was apparent from the waiting list at RSM and the feedback from local parents that more schools with the ethos of Chinthurst and RSM and operated by Charitable Trusts are required. So, RGS felt it was important to partner with Chinthurst to ensure their financial future for the long-term and thereby offer parents in the local area with wider choice as to where they educate their girls and boys.