



OUR SOCIAL IMPACT REVIEW 2024-25





Geoffrey Stanford

GEOFFREY STANFORD
Headteacher

Headmaster's Introduction

This is a moment of deep pride for the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, as we celebrate 500 years of our incredible learning institution.

What a year to welcome our 500th bursary student, who joined us in September at the start of the current academic year. This milestone is so much more than just a number; it represents lives changed, futures unlocked and the power of education to transform.

While this Social Impact Report reflects on the achievements and outreach of the 2024-25 academic year, the arrival of our 500th bursary student marks a powerful continuation of our mission. Since Thomas Horsley founded RGS during the reign of Henry VIII, the school has been shaped by a spirit of generosity and social purpose. That founding gift has echoed through five centuries, and today our commitment to widening access and opportunity is stronger than ever.

From humble beginnings, we have grown into a thriving community of more than 1,330 pupils aged 7 to 18, with social impact at the heart of our culture. Our bursary programme enables bright young people from across the North East, from families facing real financial hardship, to access an education that will change the course of their lives.

Bursary awards are strictly means-tested and typically support children whose parents work in essential but low-paid roles. Without this support, many would never have the stretch and challenge of a highly academic education.

Thanks to the generosity of our community, one in 13 students now receives a bursary, up from 1 in 16 in 2024-25, with the average award covering 93.4% of fees. This makes us not only one of the UK's leading co-educational day schools, as recognised by our TES Independent School of the Year award, but also one of the most socially inclusive.

Our academic results speak volumes. In summer 2025, our Quincentenary Year 11 cohort achieved 1,402 GCSE qualifications across 23 subjects. Over 40% of grades were at level 9, with 80.5% at grades 7 to 9. Once again these outcomes placed RGS in the top 1% nationally for 'Value Added' for the second-year running.

At A-Level, we remained the highest-performing independent school in the region, with 86% of grades at A* to B and the top 10% for Value Added. These results are a testament to the talent, ambition and resilience of our students.

Beyond bursaries, our RGS Partnerships programme continues to grow, now involving more than 125 local schools and reaching over 10,000 children. From GCSE Latin in Berwick to Robotics in Middlesbrough, our outreach stretches from the Tweed to the Tees, with most projects focused in the Newcastle area.

We believe these partnerships raise aspirations, improve attainment and open doors to further education and opportunity. As a trustee of the Laidlaw School's Trust and an Advisory Board member for Schools North East, I see first-hand the incredible impact of this work.

It is a privilege to lead a school that is redefining how independent schools serve their communities. RGS's ethos aligns deeply with my own values, and I am proud to help shape the next chapter of our story.

To everyone who supports our RGS Gives campaign, thank you. You are helping to unlock potential, gift opportunities and change lives. Together, we are building a brighter future for the North East.

With continued drive, generosity and vision, imagine what we can achieve in the next 500 years.



WHO WE ARE

The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle (RGS) stands as a beacon of educational excellence in the North East of England. As a leading independent co-educational day school for students aged 7 to 18, we are proud to be consistently recognised among the top-performing schools in the country. Our academic achievements speak for themselves, with RGS regularly leading national league tables for Northern schools. Most recently, we were honoured to receive the prestigious Senior Independent School of the Year award at the TES Schools Awards – an accolade that reflects not only our academic strength but the depth and breadth of our wider school community.

Yet, our story is about far more than results. At RGS, we believe that true education is holistic. We are deeply committed to the wellbeing of every student, offering exceptional pastoral care, comprehensive SEND provision, and an extraordinary range of co-curricular opportunities that allow young people to discover their passions, develop resilience, and grow into confident, compassionate individuals.

As the oldest educational institution in Newcastle, with a proud history stretching back over five centuries, RGS carries a profound sense of responsibility to the city and region we call home. Our legacy is not only one of tradition but also one of transformation, opening doors, raising aspirations, and building bridges between communities. Social impact is not an add-on to our work; it is woven into the very fabric of who we are.

We believe in the infinite potential of the North East and its young people. That belief drives our unwavering commitment to widening access to our fast-paced, intellectually rich curriculum. We are passionate about ensuring that students from all walks of life, regardless of background or circumstance, have an opportunity to thrive at RGS. Through our bursary programme, outreach initiatives, and community partnerships, we are working to remove barriers and create pathways to opportunity, excellence, and lifelong success.

This Social Impact report reflects that mission. It captures the many ways in which RGS is striving to make a meaningful, lasting difference, not only within our school walls, but across the wider community we are proud to be part of.

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Our Ambition



At the heart of our school is a powerful belief: when young people are inspired and supported, they can make a lasting difference. We champion excellence in every form and work to transform the North East by raising achievement and expanding horizons.

We strive to inspire and nurture both hearts and minds, giving students the confidence, freedom, and encouragement to shape their own futures. Our ambition is to reach young people across the North, regardless of background or circumstance, and to show them the power of a love for learning. We believe that education can unlock opportunities, build resilience, and open doors to futures they may never have imagined.

We work in partnership with schools that share our passion for curriculum innovation, exchanging ideas and methods to create exciting opportunities for children to explore and grow. We collaborate with further and higher education institutions, businesses, and individuals who are committed to investing in the education and development of young people in our region.

We galvanise the RGS community, alumni, families, staff, and friends, to give back to the North East. This region is rich in potential, yet the widening North-South divide continues to present real challenges. We believe that with the right support, we can help close that gap through nurturing talent, raising attainment, and building a stronger future for all.

HOW WE DELIVER



RGS School

The Royal Grammar School Newcastle educates 1,330 students, including over 350 in one of the largest Sixth Forms in the independent sector. Fully co-educational for more than 20 years, RGS offers a vibrant, inclusive environment where academic excellence and personal development go hand in hand. We are proud to offer an environment where every student, regardless of their gender, background, or circumstance, can thrive.

Since our founding in 1525, over 10,000 Old Novocastrians (ONs) have passed through our doors, many of whom have gone on to shape the economic, cultural, and social landscape of the North East and beyond. Lord Collingwood, Sir Gregory Winter, Lord Peter Taylor and Lord William Armstrong, are just a few ONs who have exemplified the values of leadership, innovation, and service, leaving lasting legacies in public life, medicine, law, and the arts, and contributing meaningfully to the wellbeing and progress of society.

At RGS, we are committed to empowering even more students to realise their full potential through RGS Bursaries, RGS Partnerships, and the invaluable support of our wider community. It is a school where every young person is given the opportunity to thrive – and to make their own indelible mark on the world.

To ensure we continue to provide the very best for current and future students, we actively fundraise for capital projects that enhance learning opportunities and modernise our facilities. These projects not only support innovative teaching and co-curricular enrichment, but also reflect our commitment to sustainability, making our historic buildings more energy-efficient and environmentally responsible.



RGS Bursaries

At RGS, bursaries are about far more than financial assistance. They are about unlocking potential, transforming lives, and opening doors to opportunity. As an independent, fee-paying school, we are proud of our long-standing tradition of offering a significant number of means-tested, fee-assisted places to students from a wide range of backgrounds.

We are passionately committed to ensuring that access to our fast-paced, intellectually rich curriculum is not limited by financial circumstance. Our bursary programme empowers talented young individuals to overcome barriers, embrace challenges, and thrive in an environment that nurtures ambition, curiosity, and confidence.

We know that the education we provide can be truly life-changing, not just for the students who receive it, but for the communities they go on to serve.

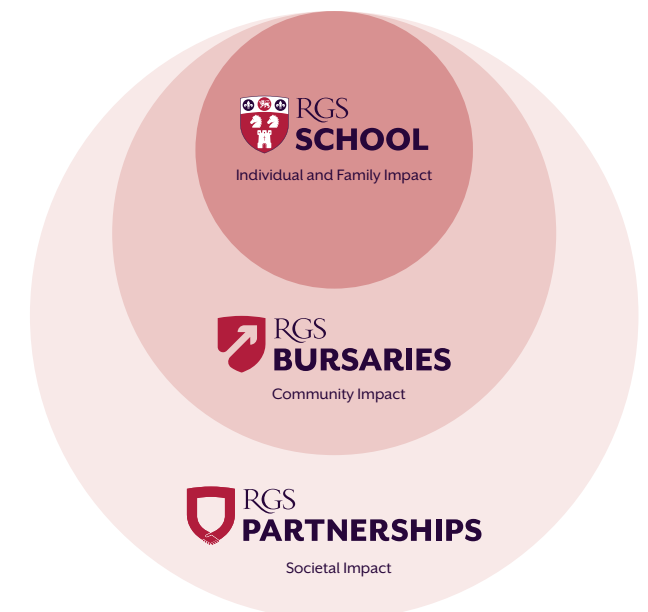


RGS Partnerships

RGS is proud to lead a growing network of partnerships with local state schools built on a shared belief in the power of education to uplift and inspire. These collaborations are designed to break down barriers and extend high-quality teaching and learning opportunities to as many young people as possible, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.

Through our RGS Partnership programme, we offer a wide range of initiatives including subject-specific workshops, academic mentoring, teacher training, and access to RGS facilities, resources, and co-curricular activities. Whether it's a science masterclass, a music ensemble, or a leadership seminar, these experiences are designed to enrich learning, spark ambition, and foster a sense of shared purpose across schools.

At its heart, the RGS Partnerships programme is about connection, between schools, between educators, and most importantly, between young people who deserve an equal opportunity to thrive.



Our Reach

This year, we are proud to share just a few of the powerful stories and figures that reflect the heart of RGS's mission. Behind every number is a life changed, a door opened, and a future reimagined.

Our bursary programme is not simply about financial support. It's about hope, opportunity, and transformation.

For many students, receiving a bursary is the moment their future takes a new direction, where a world of possibility opens before them. The impact of an RGS bursary reaches far beyond the individual student; it can transform the lives of entire families leading to generational change. By removing financial barriers, we enable talented young people to access an education that empowers them to realise their full potential, creating new opportunities not just for themselves, but for the communities they go on to serve.

Through RGS Partnerships, we extend our reach far beyond our own classrooms. Working hand-in-hand with local state schools, we share resources, expertise, and inspiration to help raise aspirations across the wider educational landscape. We offer workshops that ignite curiosity, mentoring that builds confidence, and training that empowers teachers to bring fresh ideas into their own schools. These experiences don't just enrich education, they spark ambition, nurture talent, and help young people across the region believe in their own potential.

Together, these initiatives reflect our unwavering belief in the power of education to change lives, and our commitment to ensuring that opportunity is shared as widely as possible.

During the 2024-25 academic year...



90 students at RGS attended on transformational fully funded RGS Bursaries.

93.4% average bursary awarded, focussing our finite funds where we can make the most difference.



484 bursary students supported since RGS Bursaries were established in 2002.

193 donors gifted an incredible **£1.3m** throughout the academic year.

**REECE
FOUNDATION**

BURSARY

We're proud to partner with the Newcastle-based Reece Foundation, which generously funds two means-tested Sixth Form bursaries here at RGS. These bursaries are a life-changing opportunity for students studying STEM A-Levels to join a vibrant learning community and take the first step toward a future in engineering.



1,330 students attended RGS which would have cost the tax payer an annual c£10m if educated in the state system.

Over 160 students regularly volunteered a total of 7,500 hours in our local community.

13 members of staff are Governors at local schools and 2 are Director/Trustee level.

35 local community groups and organisations access RGS buildings and facilities for their events and activities.



Over 10,000 students in local state school benefitted from 88 of RGS Partnership activities.



105 different schools across the region were involved in RGS Partnerships activities.

Over 445 teachers received training or collaborated on curriculum development.

Over 88 RGS Partnerships projects have taken place across Maths, Physics, Engineering, Robotics, Computer Science, Sport, Languages, Classics, Debating, UCAS Mentoring and many more.

3 Physics and **3** Maths trainees achieved Qualified Teacher Status and PGCE through our SCITT programme, 5 gaining jobs in state schools.



RGS BURSARIES



JAN BROWNE
Head of Bursary Support

When I reflect on my own school journey, I'm reminded daily of the transformative power of educational opportunity. Growing up in Liverpool, my parents, like so many, wanted nothing more than for me to be happy and to have chances they never had. Thanks to the generosity of donors, I was offered a fee-assisted place at an independent girls' school. That opportunity changed the course of my life.

From that beginning, I went on to become Deputy Head of a state primary school, and now I have the privilege of serving as Head of Bursary Support at RGS. It's a full-circle moment, one that brings deep personal meaning to my work every single day. Outside RGS, I serve as Regional Coordinator for the Royal National Children's SpringBoard Foundation, which partners with UK schools to provide fully funded bursary places for children from under-served communities and those with care experience.

Since joining RGS six years ago, I've worked to ensure that every bursary student feels seen, supported, and valued. My role is multifaceted: I oversee the assessment process, collaborate with our finance team to understand each family's circumstances, and personally accompany applicants during their visits. I also meet families in their homes, helping to build trust during what can be a daunting transition.

I understand that families may have concerns about entering an independent school environment and that's why I treat every family with dignity and respect and ensure discretion for bursary students throughout their time at RGS. This way, they can enjoy school life fully, just like their peers, without worry about labels or assumptions.

We've developed a bespoke Bursary Induction Programme tailored to each family's needs. Whether it is help with uniforms, travel, lunch support, or even broadband access at home, we aim to remove every barrier to success. My support doesn't end once a student joins us; I remain a consistent pastoral presence throughout their journey.

This work is more than a job to me; it's a mission rooted in my own experience. I know what it means to be given a chance and I know how far that chance can take you. At RGS, we're not just offering places; we're opening doors to futures that might otherwise remain out of reach.

Thank you to everyone who supports the RGS Bursary Programme. Your generosity is changing lives, just as it once changed mine.



BURSARIES EXPLAINED



An Overview

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of our remarkable school, we reflect with pride on a rich tradition rooted in philanthropy and vision. RGS Newcastle was founded in 1525, thanks to the bequest of Thomas Horsley, a former Mayor of Newcastle, whose enduring legacy laid the foundation for centuries of educational excellence. Thomas Horsley's gift was not merely financial; it was a profound investment in the future of young people of our region, ensuring that education would be accessible to those with talent and ambition, regardless of their means. This ethos continues to define us.

Today, our bursary programme stands as a living tribute to that founding principle. It opens doors for bright, motivated students who might otherwise be unable to benefit from the transformative opportunities RGS offers. These bursaries do more than support individuals, they enrich our entire school community, fostering diversity, inclusion, and a vibrant exchange of ideas.

Why the North East Needs Bursaries More Than Ever

In 2002, following a significant shift in government policy that ended the provision of grant-funded school places some years earlier, RGS made a bold and compassionate decision to launch its own bursary campaign. This visionary move was made possible by the generosity of bursary benefactors, individuals and organisations united by the belief that ability, not affordability, should determine a child's access to an exceptional education.

The North East of England faces some of the deepest and most persistent inequalities in education and opportunity in the country. According to figures in the Sutton Trust's Opportunity Index, the region has some of the lowest levels of social mobility, with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds significantly less likely to succeed in education or secure high-earning jobs compared to their peers in other parts of the UK.

- In Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West, **just 10% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieve a degree by age 22**
- The average earnings at age 28 for FSM pupils in **Newcastle are nearly £7,000 lower than those in the highest-performing areas**
- GCSE results show a **30% point gap in achieving grade 5 in English and Maths** between FSM pupils in Newcastle and those in top-performing London boroughs.

These figures reflect a wider reality: the North East also struggles with higher levels of unemployment, lower academic outcomes, and more children living in poverty than many other regions.

This is why bursaries at RGS matter so deeply. They are not just about financial support, they are about levelling the playing field. They allow us to reach bright, ambitious students who might otherwise be held back by circumstances beyond their control.

Bursaries also help ensure that our student community reflects the rich diversity of the region by bringing together young people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. This diversity strengthens our school, enriches classroom discussions, and prepares all students for life in a complex, interconnected world.

RGS Bursaries – levelling the playing field

Over the past two decades, the impact of RGS bursaries has been nothing short of transformational.

By offering means-tested bursaries to bright, motivated students from across the North East, we have opened our doors to young people who may never have imagined themselves here. These bursaries provide more than financial support. They empower students to overcome challenges, embrace opportunities, and transform the trajectory of their lives.

Some of the brightest children from the most challenging backgrounds now walk our corridors, thrive in our classrooms, and go on to achieve extraordinary things, all because someone believed in their potential.

Importantly, bursaries also ensure that our student community is a vibrant mix of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. This diversity enriches every aspect of school life, creating a more dynamic, inclusive, and inspiring environment for all.

But the demand is growing. Every year, we receive more applications than we can support. The need for continued financial backing is urgent and real. With your help, we can offer this life-changing opportunity to even more deserving young people.

Bursary Selection Process: Unlocking Potential, Changing Lives

We believe that talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. That's why we're proud to offer bursaries to exceptional young people from across the North East, helping to open doors that might otherwise remain closed.

Our bursary selection process is designed not just to assess academic ability, but to understand each child's story, their potential, and the difference this opportunity could make to their future.



4

A Visit That Builds Trust

For shortlisted candidates, our Head of Bursary Support visits the family home. This isn't just about assessment, it's about connection. It's a chance to listen, understand, and begin building a relationship rooted in trust and support.

1

A Fair Start for Everyone

All applicants, whether applying for a bursary or a fee-paying place, sit the same entrance exams. This ensures that every child is assessed on their ability, ambition, and promise, not their background.



2

Understanding Financial Need

For bursary applicants, we carry out a two-stage financial assessment:

- We review financial documents to understand the family's circumstances
- We take a deeper look to ensure support is given where it's most needed.

This process is handled with sensitivity and care, recognising that every family's situation is unique.

3

Looking Beyond the Numbers

We know that a bursary can be life-changing. That's why we also consider the emotional and social impact this opportunity could have, not just on the child, but on their whole family. We ask: *How might this chance shape their future?*

5

A Personalised Journey

Once a bursary offer is made, families receive ongoing, personalised support from our Head of Bursary Support. From the moment the offer is accepted, we're there every step of the way.

We also provide tailored induction activities to ensure each bursary student feels confident, welcomed, and ready to thrive from day one.



In Numbers
Since 2002...



£7.2M
raised for bursaries



Ratio of Bursary students
2002 2024
2.4% 6.8%



1,413
individuals (parents and ONs)
who have ever donated



64
legacy pledgers



£1.2M
from trusts and foundations



500
bursaries since 2002-2024



During
2024/25
academic
year...



90
bursary students in school



Range of regular donations
£4-£6,000
per month



110
regular donors



£1.3M
raised for bursaries
(inc. legacy giving)



5,831
event attendances



1 in 16
students in school
hold a bursary



93.4%
is the average bursary award



£820,000
income from legacies

JACK'S BURSARY STORY



“

The discipline and mindset RGS gave me shaped the person I am today and helped turn my passion into a lifelong career.”

Jack Lovatt (ON 97-01) never imagined his love of gyms and training could become a career.

From a student at RGS to becoming a published author and opening one of the UK's first warehouse-style gyms, Jack Lovatt's journey has been shaped by opportunity, resilience, and the bursary donors who helped him along the way.

“Gyms and fitness were part of my life from an early age. Back then, I never saw it as a career, certainly not through the lens of RGS in the late 1990s. Career's advice didn't include entrepreneurship in the late 1990s.

After university, I spent a lot of time in gyms, wondering what to do next. Eventually, I decided to pursue an idea of my own, something different and better than what was out there.

I was never a typical RGS student. I had been at Corbridge Middle School when one Wednesday we played RGS at rugby. We lost, but I scored two or three tries. My mum, ever ambitious for me, told me after the match that I had an interview and exams the next day because I was transferring to RGS. Though late in applying, she had discovered we qualified for financial assistance and the school was interested.

My grandfather took me to the Metrocentre, bought me smart clothes, and even gave me a briefcase to take notes – I carried that with pride! The next morning, I sat exams and met Mr Miller, the headmaster, who tested my vocabulary as much as my knowledge. I must have made an impression, because I was offered a place. Starting RGS was a shock.

The long commute, demanding schedule, and high expectations were unlike anything before. I often fell asleep on the bus home, sometimes waking up in Consett and paying fines.

Socially, it was tough at first, but I made great friends, some of whom are still my best friends today. I enjoyed rugby, though I excelled more in individual sports. By Sixth Form, I represented Great Britain in the Dragon Boat World Championships in China. RGS Director of Sports Mr Ponton introduced me to powerlifting, my first real exposure to training. I spent hours in the gym; it became my sanctuary.

RGS was initially intimidating, but the teachers and facilities were welcoming. Academically, I was challenged. The school pushed you to excel and offered avenues to pursue interests in sports, music, and academics. I recognised this more in hindsight. For students who wanted to progress quickly in a subject, opportunities were there. The sporting facilities were ahead of anything I had seen. The culture was about excellence in every field. For dressing for the occasion, for being able to meet people, shake their hands, and look people in the eye. RGS cultivated all of that.

After RGS, I studied Ancient History, Latin, and Greek at Newcastle University, but gyms and training remained my constant. I joined the university gym, trained friends, and after university taught Prison Service staff and inmates to weightlift. Coaching at a local MMA gym sparked the idea of turning my passion into a career.

At 25, I moved to New Jersey, studied under the National Strength and Conditioning Association, and returned to open the UK's first warehouse-style private gym in 2008. The risk was huge, but I wanted to be the best coach I could be. Nearly 20 years on, the gym thrives. I am an educator, mentoring, coaching and consulting athletes and trainers globally. I've coached well over 2,000 clients and athletes to notable results in national and international titles, as well as everyday people seeking to improve their health and fitness. I also competed in strongman competitions, winning Britain's Natural Strongest Man twice and ranking fifth at the World Championships. The natural competition is drug-tested to Olympic standards, which sets it apart from other strongman events.

Publishing articles for Men's Fitness and Men's Health, writing a book, and coaching elite athletes has been part of that journey. My goal has always been to achieve the best results for clients, develop a successful business, and maintain a culture of excellence.

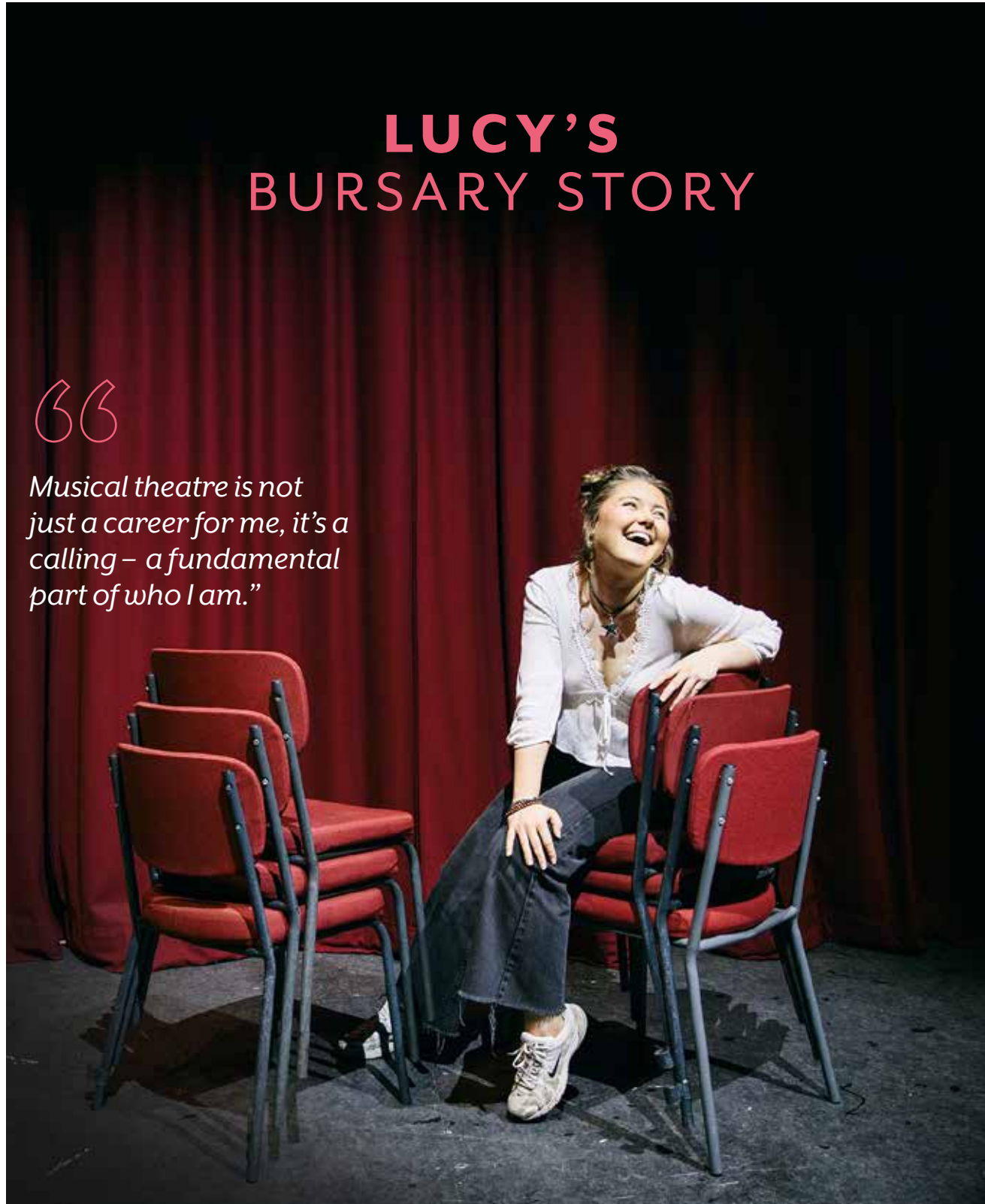
RGS taught me the mindset to excel and the confidence to pursue a non-traditional path. It gave me opportunities I would never have had elsewhere. Even my company name, Spartan Performance, came from Mr Clarke's inspiring Classics lessons on the Spartans.

My advice to current bursary students is to seize every opportunity, push yourself, and make the most of the resources available. Support the bursary fund so others can benefit too. The discipline and mindset RGS gave me shaped the person I am today and helped turn my passion into a lifelong career.”

LUCY'S BURSARY STORY

“

Musical theatre is not just a career for me, it's a calling – a fundamental part of who I am.”



All the world is a stage for Lucy Conroy (ON 19-21) who is studying for a degree in musical theatre.

Old Novo Lucy Conroy is studying for a degree in musical theatre at the prestigious Italia Conti drama school in London. She joined the Royal Grammar School on a full bursary in Sixth Form.

“From the moment I stepped onto the stage at Newcastle's Theatre Royal as an excitable seven-year-old, I knew that performing was where I belonged.

Back then, it was ‘The King and I’ and I was just a child with endless energy, but something clicked. My parents signed me up for performing arts classes and ignited a lifelong passion.

Since that first musical, my journey through the world of performing arts has been nothing short of exhilarating. On the stage I feel a sense of purpose and fulfilment that I am making a difference to people's lives in my own way.

Musical theatre is not just a career for me, it's a calling – a fundamental part of who I am. Without it, I wouldn't be me, and the RGS played a huge part in getting me here.

I grew up in Stakeford, which is smack bang in the middle between Bedlington and Ashington, and in so many ways it is a very small place.

Many friends who were content to stay in Northumberland their whole lives, were sceptical of my big plans and dreams.

Me, barrelling in, going: ‘I want to go to London, I want to do this. I want to go drama school. I want all the big things’ meant there was a sense I was getting too big for my boots; that I should stay in my lane.

I didn't want to stay in my lane, I just didn't know how to get out.

I want to show people that anything is possible. I have no doubt that there are hundreds – thousands – of unbelievably talented kids in the North East who don't have the means to fulfil their dreams. I want to be the one they look at and think: ‘well, if Lucy can do it, why can't I?’

One of my singing teachers knew about the bursary scheme at RGS and recognised my academic potential. As soon as my mum and I learned about it, attending RGS was no longer just a dream; we knew it could really happen.

Joining the RGS was key to getting out of my lane and being offered a place as I turned 16 was easily the best birthday present I could have asked for.

Walking into the school for the first time was strange because I had to battle feelings that I didn't deserve to be here. My Sixth Form blazer was from the Next outlet shop, and my trousers were hand-me-downs from my grandma.

Miss Davison, Head of Drama was the first person to make me feel like it was okay. One day I was in tears outside the drama room and we had a long chat. She said to me: ‘You deserve to be here as much as any of those other students – it doesn't matter how they sound, how they look, how much they have in their bank account, so go out there and take up the space you've earned’. So I did.

I don't think bursary donors know and appreciate just how much they changed the course of my life. I wouldn't have had any of the opportunities I've had in the past few years if it hadn't been for the RGS. I wouldn't have had the means to achieve my dreams of going drama school, and to work professionally in musical theatre.

If I am ever in the in the fortunate position to do so myself, I will donate to the bursary fund. There are so many children in the North East who are brilliant at what they do – sport, tech, business, law, whatever – and they should have as much chance to succeed as anyone else. There is a huge problem with generational poverty in the North East and I think breaking that cycle is so important by showing kids there is life beyond ‘their lane’ and life beyond what they've seen around them.

There are so many doors waiting to be unlocked, and so many big dreams to be fulfilled, and RGS bursary donors are key to that.”

Parent & student reflections

Parent reflections

“We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity afforded to our son due to the bursary he is in receipt of. The development we have seen in him the past two years has been tremendous, and it has been wonderful to see how he has thrived during his time at the school so far. We are all really hopeful for what the future holds for him.”

“We are 100% sure that without achieving the bursary, (our daughter's) school life and her future would not be so promising and exciting. The RGS is a wonderful school and we are extremely proud and grateful for everything it has given and continues to give to our daughter.”

“I believe that in life there aren't enough opportunities to change a life, however, the RGS has done so. You have enabled (our child) to excel and strive in the many ways – we will always be thankful for this.”

“I think about you, the donors... who made the ultimate act of kindness to help me, a stranger to you. Your generosity completely changed the trajectory of my life. But there are many more kids just like me, with the same ability and a fire for knowledge. So please keep doing what you are doing. You are investing in dreams, aspirations and the promise of a brighter future.”

— YEAR 13 LEAVER 2024

“The kindness and immense generosity of the donors whom I have never met are particularly inspiring to me, and I always endeavour to pass on this kindness to others and continue their generosity. I will be forever grateful to all those involved with the RGS Bursary Campaign for the immeasurable help they have given me.”

— CHRISTINA CHUI (ON 2007-18)

“I am over the moon about being part of RGS! I have heard many wonderful things about this school which makes me even more eager to be part of it. Being part of RGS makes me feel welcome and special as well as being proud to represent it. With so many facilities to use, I'm sure I will thrive and grow to achieve what I want to be when I am older.”

— YEAR 7 STARTER



“Thank you, bursary campaign, you have supported me so much to now be able to receive the best education in the North East. This will change my life forever. Being awarded a bursary tells me how lucky I am. I promise I will not let you down. I will work really hard and I will never give up.”

— YEAR 3 STARTER

“I know how lucky I am to receive this chance and I promise to work hard to achieve so many things. Without the support from the bursary campaign my parents would have never been able to send me to RGS, especially considering our very difficult circumstances. I know this is a huge step for me and my family.”

— YEAR 5 STARTER



Student reflection

“Being at the RGS has genuinely changed my life. I'm not usually a sentimental person, but I can't stress enough how much being at this school has helped me. The education is second-to-none and the lessons I've learnt on the way have been priceless. I feel like there's no way to fully pay back what the Bursary Campaign has done for me other than to do my absolute best in everything I do at RGS, whether that's in exams or representing my school in sports. I've often wondered how a stranger has changed my life, just through generosity, and that makes me strive to be a better person and to help everyone that I can. I don't believe that thank you is a sufficient term to thank and acknowledge what the campaign has done for me.”

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As our fundraising efforts grow to sustain and expand the number of bursaries we offer, we are reminded that none of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors. Their belief in the power of education has changed lives, and continues to do so.

To honour this support in perpetuity, we've had a beautiful donor bookcase installed in the school's reception, alongside newly engraved stone plaques on the external wall. These lasting tributes serve not only as a heartfelt thank you, but also as a visible reminder of the impact philanthropy has on our school community.

Lined with wooden 'books' engraved with donor names, the bookcase is a growing testament to the enduring legacy of giving. Standing 3.3 metres tall, the bookcase has a triangular pediment mirroring the Sutherland organ, with a navy-blue finish offsetting the RGS shield engraved in walnut and oak.

The project was in collaboration with RGS's own Engineering, Design and Technology department. “It's been a privilege,” says Dr Pete Warne, Head of EDT. “We're proud to have helped create something so meaningful.”

Alongside the donor bookcase, a new and deeply meaningful feature now graces the external wall of the school, overlooking Eskdale Terrace. Here, carved into stone, are the names of those who belong to our Horsley, Sutherland, and Fellows Societies — individuals whose extraordinary generosity has left an indelible mark on the life of the school.

These names represent two remarkable groups: those who have pledged a gift in their will to support the RGS Bursary Campaign, and those whose lifetime giving has exceeded £100,000.



Their commitment speaks not only to a belief in the power of education, but to a profound desire to shape the future for generations of students yet to come.

Expertly crafted and installed by Strettle Memorials, the stone plaques are a permanent expression of gratitude, etched into the very fabric of the school. They stand as a quiet but powerful reminder to every pupil, parent, and visitor of the strength of our community and the enduring impact of philanthropy.

This wall, like the bookcase inside, is a celebration of legacy. It honours those who have chosen to give back by investing in the potential of young people. It is our hope that these names will inspire others to follow in their footsteps, and that future generations will look upon them with admiration and appreciation.

We hope these installations bring the Bursary Campaign to the forefront, inspiring others to join this journey of giving and helping us ensure that every deserving pupil has the opportunity to thrive.



RGS PARTNERSHIPS



JOHN SMITH
Director of Partnerships

It has been another busy year for RGS Partnerships.

Four years after re-launching our public benefit activities post-pandemic, we now have an established and thriving programme. Whether it be teaching GCSE Latin to students in Berwick, or inspiring children through robotics in Middlesbrough, our reach extends from the Tweed to the Tees. However, most of our work takes place around the Newcastle area, with 88 projects reaching around 10,000 unique children from 125 schools in 2024-25.

The impact of this work goes well beyond the raw numbers. As the maxim goes: *not everything that can be counted counts; and not everything that counts can be counted.*

So, we measure and track as much of the impact as we can capture: the un-solicited testimonial from a local headteacher can speak louder than a number on a spreadsheet; an image of a child at that 'lightbulb moment' of understanding is as telling as the exam grade; and the cross-pollination of ideas between schools can bring deeper change than any survey metric. You will find all such qualitative and quantitative measures in the following pages.

Furthermore, it is impossible for any impact report to fully capture the longitudinal ripple effects of our projects. We are starting to see these ripples, if you know where to look. For example, I was delighted to see multiple new Year 12s at our recent RGS Sixth Form induction day, who I recognised from past partnership activities at their former schools. While the primary objective of our projects is certainly not student recruitment, if a student learns of RGS as an option for the next phase of their studies, and their school does not have a Sixth Form or perhaps the subject combinations they need, then we are more than happy for them to find their way to RGS through partnerships.

Similarly, we were delighted to see several Year 11 and 12 alumni of the Further Maths GCSE programme come back to help Year 10s at our recent celebration conference of this highly successful hybrid programme,

offering an extra qualification to schools where it is not available (more of which in this report). We will have many such stories to share in future publications, as students make their mark on the world.

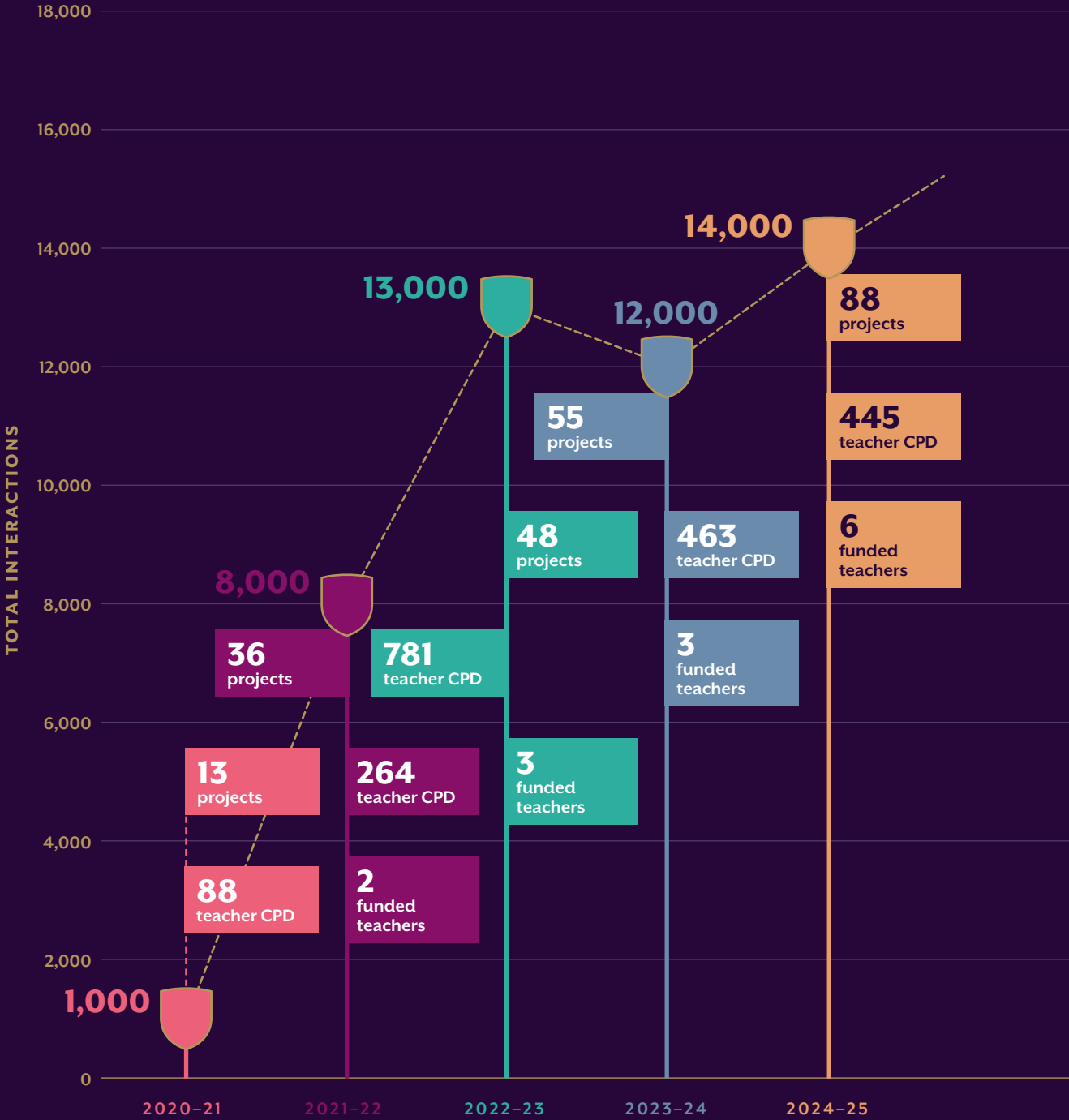
There is something special about genuine partnership work that sprinkles a little bit of magic on the wider life of the RGS. You can see it in our international success in VEX Robotics; in the expert coaching of our part-funded rugby coach, Charlie Maddison; in the student volunteering opportunities, and in the innovative computing kit, benefiting both internal and external students. When we look beyond the school walls and build relationships and activities founded on mutual benefit, sustainability and robust impact, the change can be powerful for all involved.

Looking forward to the coming school year, we have many new projects and plans in the pipeline. The partnerships team will grow to 10: alongside me, we have funding for an administrator, and there will be 8 specialists working across a range of innovative projects: Sarah, Sam and Fiona in Maths; Paul and Jeanette in Computer Science, Tom in Physics, Steve in Robotics and Charlie in Rugby. The 'funded-teacher' model has gained proof of concept, and we are delighted to welcome more funders on board; all of whom you will find listed and thanked in this publication for their vision and generosity.

We will continue to grow new Physics, Maths and Computer Science teachers, through our partnerships with the National Maths and Physics SCITT and Newcastle University. This is arguably some of our most impactful work, with these sparky teachers going on to inspire many hundreds of children through their careers.

All our partnership work depends on the dedication, energy and care of our staff, both teaching and operational, and I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved. I hope they will see their contributions in these pages.

RGS Partnerships in numbers



RESOURCING TEACHERS LIST

JOHN SMITH
Head of Partnerships
(Part Hg Foundation funded for
STEM Horizons programme)

KATE ALDRED
Partnerships Administrator
(Hg Foundation funded)

PHYSICS
REECE FOUNDATION
Tom Williams

MATHS
REECE FOUNDATION
Sarah Sharp
Fiona Swift
Sam Johansen-Hall
Jo Gwillim (additional capacity)

ROBOTICS
BRITISH ENGINES, TSG
Dr Steve Bunce

RUGBY
ENGLAND RUGBY
Charlie Maddison

COMPUTER SCIENCE
HG FOUNDATION
Paul Robson

COMPUTER SCIENCE
ALUMNUS FUNDING, NEWCASTLE
UNIVERSITY ITT CONTRACT
Jeanette Patterson

“

I would love to take this opportunity to embed Lego Education into St Michael's to give my pupils more experience of programming and robotics as I have been inspired by what you have done at RGS.”

– ST MICHAEL'S, ELSWICK

Teachers say...

“We've taken part in RGS swimming galas for two years in a row and participated in the Big Sing event at St James' Park. These events have provided great experiences for our pupils.”

– WAVERLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

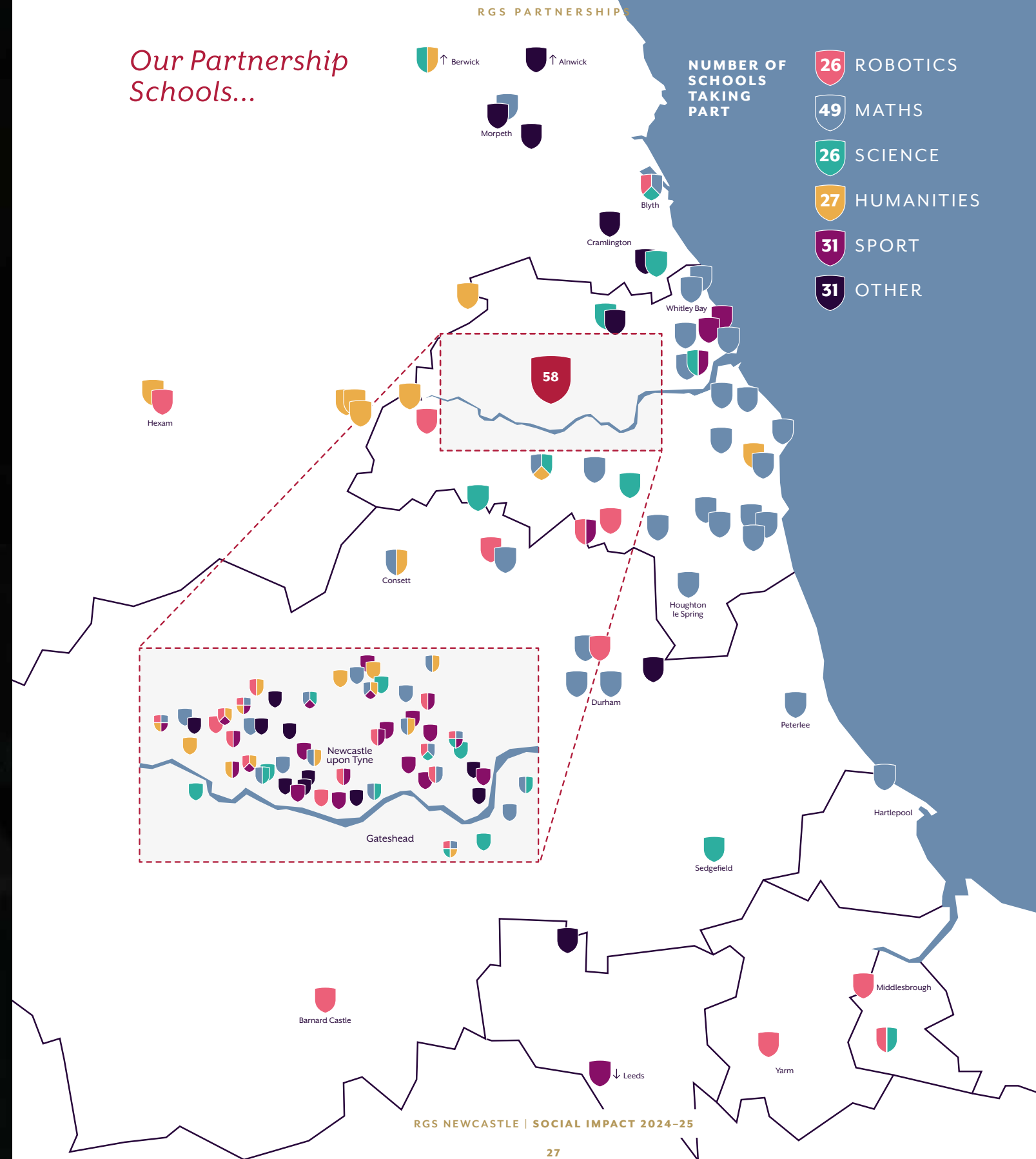
“The expertise and subject knowledge we gain, especially in computer science, is invaluable. It helps us prepare the children for secondary school and ensures they have the necessary skills. These events provide opportunities that might inspire them and break down misconceptions about different schools and subjects.”

– WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

“Thank you so much for having us. I know that our Year 4s have absolutely loved coming to RGS for their swimming lessons this term – the progress they have made is phenomenal.”

– LEMINGTON RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our Partnership Schools...



IN ACTION MATHS

When Fiona Swift joined RGS in 2024 as Maths Partnership Teacher she stepped into a role unlike any other in her teaching career.

Splitting her time between RGS and various state schools, Fiona works to raise attainment, support non-specialist teachers, and give young people more opportunities. At the heart of her work is a rapidly expanding Further Maths GCSE scheme.

The initiative began modestly six years ago when Fiona was teaching at Westfield, a girls’ school in Newcastle.

“Originally it was meant to be a ‘girls in maths’ project, but with empty seats in the room it made sense to open it up,” explains Fiona.

That decision proved pivotal. With support from the Reece Foundation, the programme expanded to include boys, giving it critical mass to grow. Soon, more than 100 students were involved, and RGS stepped in to help.

Today the scheme has grown into a network of over 200 pupils from 17 schools, and demand continues to rise.

It offers a challenging environment for the most mathematically able students. “Even in a top set, classes often target grade 6s or 7s,” Fiona explains. “But the very top students, pushing for 8s and 9s, don’t always get the stretch they need.”

By bringing these students together, the initiative provides both challenge and encouragement. The results speak for themselves. Last year, 29% of students achieved a grade 9 in Further Maths and 71% secured a grade 7 or above. For many, it builds the confidence and skills to continue with A-Level Maths and Further Maths, opening pathways to STEM degrees and careers.

One state school head of Maths described it as “transformational” in helping students realise they are as capable as their independent school peers. As Fiona puts it: “That’s social mobility in action.”

Some schools arrange transport to RGS for after-school lessons, which is paid for by The Reece Foundation. Others join virtually. Fiona recalls one Kenton student who was unable to attend live sessions but was self-motivated to watch every recording and complete every task, scoring a 9 in her GCSE.

Other students willingly travel 45 minutes each way for a one-hour session. Some attend on their day off, taking two buses just to get there. “They know it’s worth the effort,” Fiona says.

Fiona’s role is about more than teaching. It involves building relationships with schools, coordinating logistics, and designing events that extend learning opportunities. Recent examples include Bright Sparks at the Common Room of the North, and GCSE grade 8/9 revision events held at schools across the region.

In the summer, a regional Further Maths workshop took over the RGS dining hall, bringing together employers, universities, and students for a day of inspiration and connection.

Looking ahead, Fiona hopes to expand access to work experience and mentoring.

“Many of these students don’t have the same networks as those in independent schools,” she explains. “I’d love to see RGS alumni offering placements or career advice. These students are already putting in the effort and they deserve to have doors opened for them too.”

There are complex challenges facing young people studying Maths today. Along with a chronic shortage of Maths teachers, Fiona points to distractions from social media, a curriculum that struggles to meet the needs of all learners, and difficult home circumstances, undermining the collective focus.

Against this backdrop, the Further Maths initiative provides structure and encouragement.

“We can’t change everything,” Fiona says, “but we can give them opportunities that build resilience and open doors.”

Fiona’s own path into teaching was unconventional. A Chemical Engineering Cambridge graduate, she began her career at Unilever, working in supply chain and logistics. Her roles involved plenty of number-crunching, from forecasting ice cream production to planning frozen food output, but what she enjoyed most was mentoring younger colleagues.

After retraining, she found her calling in the classroom. “My students say, ‘You really love maths, don’t you, Miss?’ And they’re right – I do!”

For Fiona, the power of the RGS Partnerships programme lies in independent and state schools working side-by-side, sharing resources and expertise to give young people more opportunities.

She is quick to credit others too: the Reece Foundation for its consistent support, Westfield School for backing the original pilot, and RGS for providing the leadership and infrastructure that enabled the project to scale.

“Too often, schools operate in silos. This is the opposite,” she explains, “it’s about reaching out, building trust, and creating something bigger than any one school.

“These young people are the next generation of super-duper maths stars who will improve our region. Our job is simply to help them along the way.”

THE PROJECT Further Maths Conference

In July 2025, RGS hosted its first Further Maths GCSE Conference for Year 10 students. The event celebrated the achievements of current and past students, showcased maths-related careers, and connected students with local employers, including a keynote from a recently retired Rolls Royce Group Chief Engineer. Former Year 12 students returned to share their experiences, inspiring Year 10s to continue the course. The conference also highlighted the value of Further Maths and opened pathways to future opportunities in STEM.

“It’s really fun and interesting. It challenges us to learn new things.”

– GRACE, ST ANTHONY’S CATHOLIC SCHOOL, SUNDERLAND

THE PROJECT Bright Sparks

RGS Maths Partnerships hosted its latest Bright Sparks event in May 2025, bringing together some of the brightest Year 9 maths brains from six local schools across Sunderland and Newcastle.

Designed for high-achieving maths students, the event at The Common Room of the North focused on maths for computing, with students diving into topics such as logic problems, network diagrams, and traversable networks – concepts many had never encountered before.

“We’re here to challenge them,” said Sarah Sharp, Maths Partnerships Teacher. “These students are used to excelling in class, so we give them something new, something that makes them think deeply and work collaboratively.”

Peter Garforth, who teaches at Kepier School in Houghton-le-Spring, has been bringing students to Bright Sparks for years. “It’s for students who need that extra challenge,” he said. “They love it – and not just for the excellent biscuits!”

They get to meet others who are just as passionate about maths as they are, and it gives them the chance to visit Newcastle, which they might not normally do.

“Many of them also talk about the maths challenges afterwards and share what they’ve learned with their classmates. It creates a bit of friendly competition by allowing them to see who else is doing well in their year group.”

“Events like this are more than a talking shop. They can genuinely inspire our students to pursue maths further,” added Peter.

Participating Schools:

- Thornhill Academy, Sunderland
- Benfield School, Newcastle
- Whitburn Church of England Academy, South Tyneside
- Sandhill View Academy, Sunderland
- St Anthony’s Catholic School, Sunderland
- Kepier School, Houghton-le-Spring

IN ACTION MATHS

THE PROJECT Further Maths GCSE

2023-24 COHORT

Total number of grades	Number of grades achieved	% of total at this grade	Cumulative %
Grade 9 (A*/A**)	12	24%	24%
Grade 8 (A/A*)	13	27%	51%
Grade 7 (A)	13	27%	78%
Grade 6 (High B)	9	18%	96%
Grade 5 (High C / low B)	1	2%	98%
Grade 4 (Grade C)	0	0%	98%
Grade U (Fail)	1	2%	100%

2024-25 COHORT

Total number of grades	Number of grades achieved	% of total at this grade	Cumulative %
Grade 9 (A*/A**)	15	29%	29%
Grade 8 (A/A*)	13	25%	55%
Grade 7 (A)	8	16%	71%
Grade 6 (High B)	10	20%	90%
Grade 5 (High C/ low B)	5	10%	100%
Grade 4 (Grade C)	0	0%	100%
Grade U (Fail)	0	0%	100%

Feedback from pupils and schools

We ask pupils and schools to complete feedback forms each year and you can find the latest highlights below:

9 out of 9 schools who completed the feedback said they would recommend the course to other schools. They all rated the organisation of the course as excellent.

25 out of 28 pupils who responded gave the course teaching a top score of excellent, with the other three rating just one point lower. Ratings for the course organisation and resources were also very high.

Almost all pupils felt that the course had boosted their performance in standard GCSE Maths, with most saying that this boost was significant.

How Did We Do?

Feedback plays a vital role in understanding the impact of RGS Partnerships. Each year, we gather comments from students and schools. These insights help us see how the Further Maths GCSE course is making a difference for students across our partner schools.

The responses highlight the value of creating opportunities that extend beyond the standard curriculum. They show how the course supports academic progress while also building confidence and raising aspirations. For many students, taking part in Further Maths is not just about learning new content, it is about recognising their own potential and feeling motivated to aim higher.

Below is a selection of comments that illustrate the difference our Further Maths project is making:

SCHOOL FEEDBACK

“I just want to reiterate what I said last year, THANK YOU. These pupils truly deserve opportunities like this and we really appreciate the hard work and effort you put into this course. Our catchment and demographic provides a lot of challenges, we are about 80% pupil premium and we are always battling historic low aspirations in the community. Due to this, often our pupils see themselves as somehow less than their peers. Experiences like this broaden their horizons and allow them to not only grow as mathematicians but as individuals where they can start to appreciate their own value. The pupils this year have loved it.”

– EXCELSIOR ACADEMY TEACHER

“Fantastic support and communication throughout from both Sarah and Fiona, much appreciated due to the nature of the course. Students are keen and engaged with the content, and have really enjoyed their time studying the course.”

– BIDDICK TEACHER

“Fiona has been very good at giving me updates on my students’ progress and in working together to help the students achieve. The students who have remained on the course find the content challenging but are motivated to succeed. For example, asking for revision sessions from the maths department in school to help them prepare and to help with homework queries. For the students who were achieving 8s and 9s it has been a welcome challenge, allowing them to access and improve their deeper thinking and inter-connectivity between representations and topics that they would not see in their standard GCSE lessons. It also raises the aspirations of the students at Benfield.”

– BENFIELD SCHOOL TEACHER

“Fiona’s attention to detail is incredible and she is an asset to the wider maths community for offering and delivering this opportunity. The hours that are put in will never be fully recognised but please be assured that Whitburn and their students have benefitted. Thank you.”

– WHITBURN TEACHER



PUPIL FEEDBACK

“It was truly an amazing experience I went in thinking I will leave if it’s too hard but I got so much support and started working harder to get the high grades I’ve always wanted.”

“Very good teaching and resources available, I am amazed at the organisation of the ‘team’ and help on there as it is game changing and stands out from a lot of other subjects/teachers. Communication and feedback is also great and the teacher seems very passionate about everybody doing their best which also stands out.”

“Hi Mrs Swift, I’m very pleased to be telling you that I achieved a grade 9 in Further Maths. (75/80 marks in paper 1 and 73/80 marks in paper 2, totalling up to 148/160). Thank you very much for every lesson and each piece of homework you set, I couldn’t appreciate you more.”

“I achieved a grade 7 in further maths (107/160) as well as a 9 in standard maths. I am pleased with these results considering the amount of revision I did and my other subjects. Thank you for everything, I learned so much and I am starting A-Level Maths in September, which I am feeling fairly confident about thanks to doing further maths.”

“Hi Mrs Sharp, I just wanted to say thank you for being an amazing teacher all year. I’ve learned so much and this course is going to be a great bridge for me to A-Level maths.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the course as it gave me lots more confidence with a range of different topics and it helped me gain an extra qualification that I wouldn’t have had access to otherwise.”

IN ACTION CULTURAL CAPITAL

THE PROJECT Music

Music is an expanding area of our Partnerships work, with 2024’s Big Play Day bringing together more than 200 young musicians from schools across the North East.

Hosted in the RGS music department, the day concluded with a spectacular performance of Bachianas Brasileiras No. 2: Toccata (The Little Train of the Caipira) by Heitor Villa-Lobos.

Orchestral players from Years 7 to 13 worked in instrumental sections – strings, brass, woodwind and percussion – to learn the piece before joining for a large-scale public performance.

With only a morning of rehearsal, students demonstrated teamwork, resilience, and musical skill in a collaborative finale. For members of our Senior Orchestra, it was a rare chance to play within a full symphonic ensemble and a memorable experience for all involved.

A long-standing project is BandFest, where we invite local schools to compete in a battle of the bands-style event, which is always hugely popular. In 2024, bands from Seaton Sluice Middle, Queen Elizabeth High School Hexham, Duchess’ Community High School, Sacred Heart, Newcastle High for Boys, Gosforth East Middle, Gosforth Academy, Excelsior Academy and Jesmond Park Academy took part in the Miller Theatre event where ‘Central Arcade’ were crowned winners. Runners up we our very own ‘Echo’ from RGS.



THE PROJECT OMS Rocks, by Rachael Shaw-Kerr, teacher of drama

OMS Rocks was an idea conceived by me and RGS Music Technician, Ben Squire on the coach whilst on the Paris choir tour. We were inspired by how quickly we could set up and perform with a huge orchestra in all different venues – band stands, hospitals, all over! We got to thinking about schools who don’t have specialist music facilities, who would benefit enormously from the experience of hosting a concert and having parents being able to see their children performing and enjoying music.

As part of the Partnership scheme, I have been delivering Community Theatre events in the Tyne Valley, where there is such an appetite for opportunities to develop the performing arts. There seemed to be a real disparity between the opportunities for additional sporting activities on offer and those in the Arts. This led us to approaching Ovingham Middle School (OMS) and meeting with them as to whether they would be keen to let us trial our ‘pop up rock concert’ idea, which they were absolutely over the moon to accept.

In October 2024, a group of 20 musicians and singers from OMS came to our school for a morning of joint rehearsals, with our Sixth Form ‘Funktion Band’ members acting as teachers and mentors, and Miss Armatage from OMS taking a lead on the singing. I was astounded at how generously our students shared their skills to guide and encourage their younger counterparts; within minutes, all the students were making music and making friends. My colleagues Sarah Bolt and Ben Squire had done a wonderful job of selecting and arranging popular and upbeat music, so that even the least experienced students could play.

It was fantastic to see the first three tracks come together so brilliantly after such a short rehearsal, thanks to Sarah Bolt’s skilful and enthusiastic conducting and direction.

After a week of individual rehearsal, we set off early, with a minibus full of excited RGS students and a van absolutely crammed full of every possible piece of equipment needed to create a very special concert. RGS stage crew worked effectively and professionally with budding technicians from OMS, to set up lighting and sound equipment and to transform their school gym into a spectacular concert space.

Another day of intensive rehearsal concluded with a marvellous concert, featuring an original rap set to ‘Rapper’s Delight’, a group performance of ‘Happy’, ‘Don’t Look Back in Anger’ and ‘Higher and Higher’ as well as some marvellous solo performances. The reaction of the audience, made up of parents and friends, spoke volumes about the success of the event. The applause went on and on and on, as the participants stood there, taking it all in and beaming with pride.

I would argue that there is no experience better than playing in a musical ensemble, working together with others to a common goal and achieving a joyful outcome together, and this was a very special event that really epitomised the great opportunities that the Partnership scheme provides. I am incredibly proud of my unbelievably hardworking colleagues, and of all the students who took part. It was a special day that will live long in the memory for all of us lucky enough to be part of it.



THE PROJECT Borrow Box

For three years we have been working closely with local partner schools to provide boxes of class-readers for primary schools, packed with work from exciting and diverse contemporary authors, with a focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Schools add their own resources and re-circulate year on year. We recently added in a box of KSI/2 picture books.

The Reading Groups run in the Year 12 carousel slot where our Sixth Formers facilitate stretch and challenge ‘book clubs’ for high achievers. This is a more structured and separate offer to the regular Voluntary Service offer.

“It’s a brilliant idea and will really benefit teachers and pupils. It is amazing when the children can read along with their own copy of the text. It’s brilliant for whole class reading lessons or simply sharing a text at the end of each day. We will definitely keep an eye on the book list to see if there is anything suitable for our children in future. Thank you!”

THE PROJECT Classics

In association with the Classics For All project, we supported a class of four students through GCSE Latin at Berwick Academy which involved remote teaching on Teams every week and half termly visits to Berwick. The aim is to introduce more state school pupils to the benefits of studying Latin.

IN ACTION PHYSICS

THE PROJECT
Academic Intervention

Targeted support was provided across four partner schools for A-Level Physics, focusing on exam preparation and core skills such as problem solving and reasoning. GCSE intervention was delivered weekly in two schools, helping high-potential pupils not taught by Physics specialists. Bede Academy received tailored support for T Level Engineering, benefiting both students and staff through revision sessions and shared resources.

THE PROJECT
Non-specialist and ECT Support

A full review of the T Level specification at Bede Academy identified links with GCSE and A-Level content, enabling cross-department collaboration and resource sharing. At North East Futures UTC, continued support for a non-specialist A-Level Physics teacher has contributed to strong results and doubled enrolment in Year 12.

THE PROJECT
Project Based Work

Year 9 and 10 pupils from Benfield School completed the Beamish Engineering Project, applying scientific ideas in a hands-on setting. Their work was showcased at Beamish Museum. The school plans to continue the project independently following successful staff recruitment.



THE PROJECT
Innovation Days

Now part of the Physics Super-Curricula, Innovation Days engage pupils in creative problem-solving over four full days. Co-hosted with scientist and author Professor Neil Downie, these events have led to inventive outcomes such as reactive street lighting and ferrofluid-based maglev trains. All participating schools have requested repeat events.



HEADLINE
Stats

In the academic year 2024-2025, five secondary schools were visited on a weekly basis, and a further nine schools or other education providers were involved on a less frequent basis.

2,400
pupil hours delivered

90 hours
of teacher CPD / training

170
individual students

10 projects

IN ACTION SPORT

THE PROJECT
Rugby – Charlie Maddison

We're thrilled to welcome former England Rugby player Charlie Maddison to the RGS Partnerships programme – a dynamic initiative part-funded by England Rugby (RFU).

Charlie, who previously played for Newcastle Falcons, is now one of 40 School Rugby Managers working across the country. His role is split between coaching at RGS and delivering rugby sessions in local partner schools, particularly in areas with historically low participation. His mission: to inspire young people and build sustainable rugby pathways from school to club level.

This exciting development builds on RGS's successful funded-teacher model. Now RGS Partnerships is bringing that same energy and innovation to sport.

Charlie's weekly schedule includes mornings in partner schools, where he motivates and engages students who may never have picked up a rugby ball before. In the afternoons and on Saturdays, he brings his elite-level experience to the RGS rugby programme, enriching it with professional insight and passion.

“What we're trying to do is give kids an opportunity to get a ball in their hands, run around, and get a taste of something they maybe haven't done before,” says Charlie.

“Hopefully that will spark their interest and lead them to their local rugby club. It's a good way to help them connect.”





It's not just about swimming – it's about confidence, resilience, and joy. And that's something worth diving into.

– TRACY ETHERINGTON



THE PROJECT

Beyond the Pool: RGS Swimming Partnerships

At RGS, swimming has always been more than just a sport; it's a life skill, a confidence builder, and a bridge between schools and communities.

Through its innovative Swimming Partnerships Scheme, RGS is helping children from across Newcastle learn to swim, gain vital lifesaving skills, and grow in confidence, often for the very first time.

The RGS Swim Confidence Club was established in 2021 in response to the closure of Newcastle's West End pool, which disrupted National Curriculum swimming provision for many local schools. In the absence of accessible facilities, RGS stepped in to offer a solution.

The programme provides five-week blocks of swimming sessions led by RGS swimming teacher Tracy Etherington, supported by trainee PE teachers from the North East Partnership School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) as part of their teaching practice.

Schools select 20–30 children who lack water confidence or swimming ability to take part. Each child is assessed in the first and final sessions, with progress celebrated in a fun gala for all partner schools at the end of the summer term.

In 2024-25, more than 120 weak or non-swimmers from seven primary schools gained significant water confidence, with three previously non-swimming pupils achieving distances of over 150 metres in just five weeks.

The outreach programme welcomes pupils from schools across the ONE Trust in the outer west of Newcastle. Many of these children have never been in the water before and the scheme offers them structured, supportive lessons that build from the basics to more advanced skills, including personal survival techniques.



“Our goal is for every child to swim a full length and complete a personal survival rescue,” says Tracy. “Some arrive nervous and unsure, but by the end, they're swimming confidently, often without floats. It's amazing to see.”

The impact is immediate, visible... and audible. “There's lots of noise, lots of shouts for help – and they love every minute of it!” Tracy adds. “Every week they arrive smiling and leave the same way.”

Amongst the many pupils helped by the scheme, one pupil's journey stands out in Tracy's memory. “When he joined us, he could barely move through the water. By the time he left, he'd swum 12 lengths on his back. It was really emotional to see how far he'd come.”

These moments are what make the scheme so rewarding for the staff involved. “I go home every week buzzing from these lessons,” Tracy says. “The children are always saying, ‘Watch this! Look what I can do!’ It shows how much they're learning and how proud they are of their progress.”

But it's not only students who benefit from their time in the pool. The scheme also plays a vital role in teacher training.

SCITT trainees from Newcastle University take part in the programme as part of their PE teacher training. Anna, a trainee on the North East Partnership SCITT, describes the experience as “really good – very noisy, but good fun!”

Anna and her fellow trainees complete four-week placements at RGS, gaining hands-on experience teaching swimming, something many secondary PE trainees don't usually get. “It's different from what we're used to, but it's been really enjoyable. It's good to mix it up.”

Tracy supports the trainees throughout. “Some have never been poolside before, so they're really thrown in at the deep end – literally! I walk them through the basics, give them tips, and they quickly get into it.

With nearly an hour each session, they can achieve a lot.”

For Milecastle Primary School, the partnership has become a valued part of their curriculum. Headteacher Suzanne Richardson says being invited to join the scheme was an opportunity she jumped at.

“We'd worked with RGS before, and when this opportunity came up again, we knew how invaluable it was. We signed up straight away.”

The programme offers a two-week intensive swimming block, which Suzanne says is far more effective than weekly sessions. “It's really intense, and the fact that the instructors are in the water makes a huge difference and we've seen more children pass their 25 metres this way.”

Beyond swimming, the experience broadens pupils' horizons. “Some of our children have never been in a pool before. This gives them a chance to gain a vital life skill. It also helps them get used to visiting other schools and meeting new staff, which is great for their confidence.”

The scheme culminates in a joyful end-of-year gala, where all participating schools come together for a day of races, relays, and fun. “We even dress the teachers up in Hawaiian outfits,” Tracy laughs. “It's a full day of celebration.”

Thanks to generous support from the HMCK charity, and more recently the St Nicholas' Educational Trust, the programme remains free for partner schools with travel and equipment costs covered.

The RGS Swimming Partnerships Scheme is an example of how schools can work together to deliver meaningful, lasting impact. It equips children with essential skills, supports teacher development, and fosters a sense of community and shared achievement.

As Tracy puts it, “It's not just about swimming – it's about confidence, resilience, and joy. And that's something worth diving into.”



THE PROJECT

Partnership Sports Festivals

Our Partnership Sports Festivals welcomed Year 4 pupils from local schools, offering them the chance to experience new sports alongside coaching and friendly competition in familiar ones. These events not only promote physical activity and teamwork but also help build confidence and enthusiasm for sport at an early age.

A standout feature is the involvement of our Year 6 students, who take on the roles of referees and role models. Their leadership and maturity at such a young age are consistently impressive and contribute to the positive atmosphere of the festivals.

In 2024-25, we reached approximately 560 participants through these events, strengthening community ties and encouraging active lifestyles among younger students.

IN ACTION

COMPUTER SCIENCE

THE PROJECT
*Sparkling Curiosity,
Shaping Futures:
RGS pioneers Computer
Science project*

“It’s not just about teaching students how to code, it’s about sparking interest in a subject that will shape the future,” says Paul Robson, Computer Science teacher and one of the newest faces in the RGS Partnership scheme. “And it’s not just about exam results. We want to see more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and more girls in particular, choosing Computer Science.”

Paul joined RGS in April 2025 to lead a pioneering national initiative that brings Computer Science lessons to students who might otherwise miss out.

The three-year programme, fully funded by the Hg Foundation – the charitable arm of the private equity firm Hg Capital – tackles a pressing challenge: the shortage of specialist computer science teachers working in state schools.

“Our role is to coordinate, support, and teach so that schools without specialist Computer Science teachers can still give their students the chance to succeed,” Paul explains.

“Many state schools simply cannot recruit qualified Computer Science teachers,” Paul explains. “Some rely on staff transferring from other subjects, which is tough. That is where we can step in.”

Under the STEM Horizons scheme, five independent schools, including RGS, each partner with five North East state schools, to deliver specialist teaching both in person and remotely.

The participating schools are Academy 360 in Sunderland, Blyth Academy, Bede Academy, Consett Academy, and St Bede’s in Peterlee. They qualified for the programme because of their high proportion of students on free school meals. For these schools, RGS’s support offers a way to raise attainment and broaden horizons without adding pressure to already stretched budgets.

The programme has been met with enthusiasm, says Paul. “Most headteachers ask, ‘How much do we pay for this?’ When we say, ‘Nothing, it’s fully funded by the Hg Foundation,’ they are amazed. They are gaining access to an experienced Computer Science teacher at no cost. One headteacher even said, ‘I do not understand why every school would not want this!’

Globally, the tech sector faces critical skills shortages, yet certain groups, including girls, students from low-income backgrounds, and some ethnic communities, remain underrepresented in tech education and careers. “It’s unfair and it’s a waste of talent,” says Paul. “This programme is about giving these young people a real chance.”

Getting more young people interested in Computer Science helps close the growing skills gap in technology, prepares students for a future where digital skills are essential, and opens doors to high-growth, well-paying careers, building a more diverse and innovative workforce in the process.

The initiative is being independently evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to ensure its impact is measurable and robust.

While full results will not be known until the current Year 10s complete their GCSEs in 2027, the programme is already making a difference by igniting curiosity and building confidence while giving students the opportunity to shape tomorrow’s global tech workforce.

“It’s about sparking interest in a subject that will shape the future.”

– PAUL ROBSON



IN ACTION ROBOTICS

THE PROJECT

RGS Partnerships Teacher – Driving STEM Collaboration Across Schools

RGS Partnerships teacher Dr Steve Bunce works with partner state schools to develop robotics and computing programs. Sponsored by British Engines and TSG, he creates meaningful opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Through hands-on events such as VEX Robotics, Lego competitions, and the 'Robot Olympics' students from our Partnership schools explore technology in fun and engaging ways.

Why This Role Matters

Steve was drawn to the role because it focuses on building genuine partnerships rather than one-off outreach.

What Makes It Rewarding

Teachers and students gain practical experience, share expertise, and learn together. Robotics equipment, team teaching sessions, and collaborative events create rich learning environments where diverse backgrounds come together.

Student Impact

Students benefit from exposure to new ideas, perspectives, and technologies. Friendships formed across schools enhance the sense of community and belonging. Access to resources and opportunities helps students realise their potential and develop practical STEM skills.

2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

Projects and Events Include:

- LEGO Workshops
- NE Auto Expo Robotics
- Net Zero STEM Event
- NUSTEM Girls Event
- Outer West Sphero Event
- Robotics Partnership with Egglecliffe First Tech
- VEX Robotics
- Teesside University Accessibility Workshop.

STEM Net Zero was designed to inspire the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), engage over 1,000 young people aged 9 to 13 from the region to encourage interest in future careers that will help build a more sustainable world.

RGS facilitated an exciting workshop on Electric cars and sustainability in the car industry, by using Sphero robots to simulate and enthuse the children.

Positive Outcomes:

- Students develop confidence, creativity, and problem-solving skills
- Teachers collaborate across schools, sharing expertise and resources
- Sustainable partnerships create long-term learning opportunities
- Exposure to STEM inspires aspirations and broadens perspectives.

Key Message

RGS Partnerships proves that collaboration enriches education for all. By working together, schools unlock opportunities, raise aspirations, and equip students with the skills and confidence to succeed in STEM and beyond.



IN ACTION VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Over the past academic year, approximately 70 students from Years 12 and 13 chose to volunteer in the local community.

Most were involved in supporting children's reading development in some of Newcastle's more disadvantaged areas. Their contribution has been deeply appreciated by the primary schools they've worked with, and recent feedback from staff includes:

- "It's great to have your students in school. They have a lovely manner with our children and have built a great rapport with the staff they support."
- "More professional than student teachers."
- "The calibre of students is outstanding."
- "The RGS students who have been reading 1:1 with my Year 6s have been absolutely amazing. So flexible too. They always feedback how the children have read and are so polite. Their questioning of the children and written comments have been super helpful."

Our students gain a great deal from this experience. Many choose to continue into Year 13 at the same placement, and after working with the same children for two years, they often feel quite emotional seeing the progress and growth in the children's reading. The bonds they form are strong, and the children genuinely look forward to their weekly sessions.

Student reflections highlight the personal impact of the programme:

- "Getting to see the children every week. They remember us and tell us how their week is going before we read, which is really sweet – and it's so relaxing to read to them."

- "Seeing the children learn new things and enjoy reading is fulfilling."
- "The learning experience and giving back to those who need it most."
- "Helping the children who are struggling to read and seeing their faces light up as they begin to read better. I also enjoy the enthusiasm some of the children show up with every single week, as if they were waiting for the reading all week."





RGS
CAPITAL



SUSAN BECK
Director of External Relations

As we celebrate our remarkable 500th anniversary, the generosity of our donors continues to shape the very fabric of RGS in lasting ways. This is most visible in our buildings and grounds. Far more than architectural resources, these are places where ambition is nurtured, talent is developed, and futures are forged.

We are the custodians of the remarkable school buildings we have inherited, but that brings with it the responsibility to preserve and enhance them for future generations.

Our Eskdale Terrace site, opened in 1906, has been the heart of RGS for over a century. Its foundation stone was laid in 1905 by Alderman Thomas Richardson, and the building was formally opened by the Duke of Northumberland in 1907.

Over the decades, this site has been enriched by the generosity of eminent supporters including Sir Alfred Palmer, who gifted the cricket pavilion in 1913, and Sir Arthur Munro Sutherland, whose philanthropy funded the Memorial Organ, Sutherland Baths, rifle range and the land that would become the home of Novos Rugby Football Club. Old Novocastrians funded the school's iconic clocktower, and our more senior ONs will recall how The Right Honourable Lord Plender funded the iconic fixtures and fittings of the school's eponymous 1930's library, much of which remain at RGS today. These benefactors will never be forgotten for their role in shaping the school's physical and cultural identity.



2024-25 PROJECTS



PETER AND WULIANG WALKER,
WITH HEAD GEOFFREY STANFORD

“

My wife Wuliang and I decided upon funding for the renovation of the impressive fabric of the school to enable students and staff to appreciate the physical space for many years to come. It's a privilege to be able to give back.”

Joining this distinguished list of donors is Professor Peter Walker (ON 52-60) who, along with his wife Wuliang, has made a lasting difference to the historic Eskdale Terrace building by funding essential renovations. Their generosity has ensured cherished features such as the original lockers, wooden sash windows, and masonry, will endure for generations of students to come.

Thanks to their continued support, work has also begun on installing our new 500th Anniversary gates by the RGS Performing Arts Centre (PAC). The commemorative and decorative gates will help act as a safety and security barrier, increasing commercial opportunities for the school.

Other donors making smaller, yet deeply meaningful, gifts have also left their mark. Recent examples include John Turnbull (ON 60-67), who has paid forward his love of rowing at RGS by funding a new school rowing programme, complemented by the purchase of two new Concept2 RowErg rowing machines, and the late Keith Moodie (ON 42-50) who, through a gift in his will funded a piano that now holds pride of place in the PAC.

By supporting RGS's physical environment our donors are investing in the future of education in the North East. Their generosity and philanthropic vision ensure the school remains a place of opportunity and excellence.

Thank you to all who give. Your support protects a rich history and builds a strong future for all who study within these walls.



Admiral Lord Cuthbert Collingwood

The portrait of Old Novo Admiral Lord Cuthbert Collingwood (1748-1810) was the first to be displayed in the Hall. It is a copy of a work by artist Charles Lonsdale, whose original hangs in Newcastle's Mansion House. This copy was painted by ON Harry Fogan (1877-1933) and donated to the school by ON Dr Percy Laws in 1911. Its frame was hand-carved by the school's woodwork master, Mr Appleby.

Oil paintings require regular care, as time and environmental factors can take their toll. Two years ago, specialist conservators assessed the portrait and found heavy surface grime, minor areas of damage, and a slackened canvas. Thanks to funding from David Mole (ON 56-61), the painting will now be cleaned and repaired, ensuring it remains part of our heritage for generations to come.



Together, We Can Change Lives

The incredible work highlighted in this Social Impact report is possible only because of the generosity of individuals, trusts, foundations, and corporate partners who believe in our mission.

Our bursary programme exists to bridge the gap between talent and financial means. For a child, a bursary at RGS is more than a school place – it's a life-changing opportunity. A gateway to possibility, ambition, and achievement.

Our goal is simple: to provide exceptional education for those who would benefit most. Many of our applicants come from communities where opportunities like those at RGS can completely change the course of a child's life. Depending on circumstances, a bursary may cover all or part of a pupil's tuition fees throughout their time at RGS, ensuring they can thrive without financial barriers.

You can help make this transformation happen. Anyone can support RGS Gives through a one-off gift or regular monthly contributions. Every gift matters. Every gift changes lives.

As we celebrate the school's 500th anniversary, we invite members of the RGS community to join one of our giving clubs – 500 Club, or 1525 Quincentenary Club. These clubs offer a meaningful way to be part of our legacy and help shape the future for generations to come. Details of each are listed below.

At the close of our Quincentenary year, your commemorative wooden book will be permanently sealed within a glazed time capsule cabinet in the school reception as an enduring tribute to your support.

**Together, we can change lives.
Together, we can make a difference.**



Donor Bookcase

Our reception bookcase at RGS celebrates those who have made a significant contribution to our bursary fund, featuring an elegant wooden 'book' engraved with each donor's name.

During our Quincentenary year celebrations, we are also offering the opportunity for our donors to join two exclusive clubs. Commemorative books will be placed on the bookcase in your name.

The Giving Clubs



500 Club

Celebrate our 500th anniversary with a gift of **£500**. Your support marks this historic milestone and ensures our legacy continues for centuries more.



Quincentenary Club

Mark 500 years since Thomas Horsley's visionary gift by contributing **£1,525**. Join a tradition of generosity that began in 1525 and help shape the future of our region.



Horsley Society

Leaving a legacy gift to RGS is a powerful expression of trust in the future. It's an enduring investment in generations to come, honouring the life-changing impact of education.

A gift in your will, or in memory of someone special, will be permanently inscribed on a stone plaque facing Eskdale Terrace, creating a lasting tribute to your commitment and our shared values.

Why I give



JOHN CHRISTOPHER DEAN
ON 1945–1953

Loyalty runs deep in my family. My father dedicated 43 years of his life to RGS, including nine years as Second Master. He believed the school was the be-all and end-all, and so did my mother. Naturally, he wanted me to attend, and I did, starting in September 1945.

I was fortunate to be in a form where a record number of pupils were awarded state scholarships. That mix of minds and backgrounds shaped me profoundly.

I left RGS in 1953 and joined Barclays Bank, but the school never left me. My memories of those years are vivid. Wednesday afternoons meant cross-country runs, even in the rain, to the isolation hospital on the Town Moor. Prefects made sure no one skipped it, though we tried, pleading stitches and other ailments! I remember rationing and school dinners served by the formidable Ma Stevens. It was there I had my first banana and Walls Ice Cream came around once a fortnight, a real treat in those austere times.

There was the Cadet Force, school camps, and countless experiences that helped shape our character. RGS was a place of opportunity, especially during the direct grant scheme, which brought in pupils from all walks of life. That diversity inspired me. It is one of the reasons I give to the RGS Bursary Fund today.

I have always had a soft spot for the school, just like my father did, and I owe much of my relatively comfortable life to the grounding I received at RGS. Giving back feels like the right thing to do, not just for me, but in honour of my father's legacy. A few years ago, my son-in-law asked if it would give me pleasure to support the school now, rather than only leaving a legacy gift. It did. That decision has brought me immense satisfaction. Together with the school, we are achieving something tangible.

I went to school with some exceptionally bright individuals who went on to achieve very successful careers. If a child shows potential, they deserve a chance. I remember my father coming home with sheets of intelligence tests. The top scorers were awarded local authority assistance. They were vetted carefully, and most of them flourished.

That is what the bursary fund is about, giving bright children a chance. Many have seized the opportunity and done extremely well. I think of the children whose bursaries I am funding and hope they thrive. Of course, there will be worries, university life and peer pressure among them, but RGS provides a solid foundation. It is a place that recognises ability and nurtures it.

Giving to the fund gives me a warm feeling and I am proud to have done so. RGS is a beacon of educational excellence in the North East. It is extremely well regarded, and I am proud to have been a student there. We live in the 21st century, and whatever our views on politics or the state of the nation, we cannot live in a divided society. If we have the means to narrow those divisions, then we must act. That depends on people like me supporting young people with academic promise. Where would they go if they did not have the chance to attend RGS?

I come from the generation that lived through the War. As a boy, I remember how hard up we were. Though my father worked at RGS, he was not well paid. He and my mother worried about money. Wartime families watched every penny, and I have always done the same. We did not have exotic holidays. But now, we have reached a stage where money has built up. So where should it go?

I support a range of charities – I am more philanthropic than I ever imagined I would be – but RGS holds a special place in my heart. Giving to the bursary fund is my way of honouring the past, investing in the future, and keeping the spirit of opportunity alive.

“

That is what the bursary fund is about, giving bright children a chance. I think of the children whose bursaries I am funding and hope they thrive.”



OUR SUPPORTERS

The following individuals and organisations have been made Fellows of the Royal Grammar School Educational Trust by the Governors of RGS due to their commitment and substantial support in making a difference to less advantaged children and their families:

Sutherland Society members

Cristine and Brian Daglish
Hospital of St Mary the virgin
Jim Ryan
Peter and Wuliang Walker
Reece Foundation
The Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust



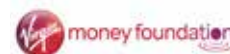
Fellows of the RGS

Adam Applegarth
Brian Ritchie
Crispian Strachan
David Houseman
Dr Bernard Trafford
Garfield Weston Foundation
Guy Readman
James FX Miller
Julie Drummond

Louis Taylor
The Windward Trust
Paul Walker
Percy Hedley 1990 Charitable Trust
Philip Snowden
Richard Metcalfe
Roger A Pattie
Squires Foundation
Susan and David Ratliff

The Advani family
The Benfield Motors Charitable Trust
The Farthing Settlement
The Reece Foundation
The Ridley Family Charitable trust
The Sir James Knott Trust
William R Eden

Our RGS Partnerships Supporters



Contact



To talk about working with us on RGS Partnerships, please contact John Smith, Director of Partnerships at j.smith@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



To talk more about applying for a bursary, please contact Jan Browne, Head of Bursary Support at bursaries@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



To talk more about RGS Gives, and the very many ways you can support us to change lives, please contact Elaine Flynn, Head of Development at development@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk





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