

***In Memoriam* : Some Personal Recollections of Andrea Goodwin**



Andrea Goodwin joined the RGS in June 2009 as Bursar's Assistant following the retirement of long-serving Valerie Armstrong. Coming from Newcastle Legal Centre, she clearly possessed the requisite skills to support Bursar Richard Metcalfe in meeting the ever-increasing demands from government that the school prove itself

compliant, by means of a mountain of paperwork (much of it via the Bursar's Office), covering a wide range of activities including safety on school trips, Safer Recruitment of staff, Health and Safety and the rest. Richard and I can boast that our judgement of Andrea's skills was accurate! Indeed, so precise was her attention to detail and her insistence (of herself, as well as of others) that things be done right, that we soon wondered how we had coped before she came.

Meanwhile, the Independent School Standards against which the school was inspected (over 400 by this point) and, still more exigent, the labyrinthine and exponentially-growing requirements of Safeguarding regulations with regard not only to the appointment of staff but even to the approval and monitoring of visitors to the school made us realise that, like most independent schools, we should appoint a dedicated Compliance Officer. Andrea was the natural, indeed the obvious, choice. And she rose to the challenge. With tactful but indomitable firmness, essential when colleagues understandably resented the imposition of additional paperwork, she made sure that, among many other things, every school trip (by then, approaching 300 a year) was fully documented and signed off; that every staff appointment (teaching and support staff alike) and even the admission of visiting coaches or speakers was accompanied by the required criminal record checks and verified references; and that all the myriad school policies (too many to count) were published and updated as required. If you haven't worked in a modern independent school office, you may find it hard to comprehend the enormity of this burden: but it's broken many a school administration. Not the RGS, however. In December 2015 the Independent Schools Inspectorate announced that they would be arriving in a few days' time-when, by unfortunate coincidence, Andrea was on jury service. However, every document demanded

as evidence was immediately located and made available, and she even managed to chide one inspector (who had kindly delayed his meeting with her and the Bursar until she had returned from a day in court) who had somehow got hold of an outdated version of a policy. His criticisms evaporated as soon as he was presented with the correct, compliant version.

The process of independent school inspection is a hard grind: though, arguably, not as hard as the task of being constantly prepared for it (I can say these things from the safety of retirement!). But my memory of that inspection, from which the school emerged triumphant, with the highest possible grades in every aspect, centres on that scene, Andrea serenely unflappable, the inspector quickly moving into reverse gear. Normally modest almost to a fault, Andrea did manage a smile of satisfaction! Notwithstanding the need for her role to be implacably demanding at times, Andrea was a team-player, a huge asset to the good-natured, hard-working atmosphere in our newly created open-plan school office. She loved the school and paid it the compliment of entrusting her much-loved son Harry to the sixth form: he thrived, excelling academically and on the hockey pitch, and added joy and pride to her experience of the school. Alas, shortly after I retired, Andrea's illness returned: tragically, this time even her indomitable spirit could not defeat it. The huge crowd at her funeral, held just before lockdown prohibited such tributes, bore testament to the esteem and affection in which she was held. The school owes her a great debt, misses her hugely, and offers its love and sympathy to Harry, husband David and all her family.

By Bernard Trafford Headmaster 2008-17