



RIVER ACADEMY

Issue 6

## Headteacher's Update

18<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

The first seven weeks of term have flown by although we know both teachers and students are feeling it as we go into the final week of the half term. However, we are keeping our standards high, and it is pleasing to see many of the students responding so positively to our expectations. On Thursday Mrs Billingham delivered a brilliant assembly regarding revision and success and the students listened and participated perfectly. We had a visitor from a school in Newbury who wanted to see us in action who remarked on how well presented, enthusiastic and positive the students are and that they should be proud of how they present themselves. This was echoed by a visit from the CEO of the Trust, Jon Peck, on Thursday and it was a delight to see his face as students held doors open, bade him good afternoon and smiled their way between lessons. River Academy is a special place to work and the whole staff, despite their fatigue, love coming to work. What I really love in our staff meetings is that whilst things are going well, they are constantly looking at ways of polishing our systems further and making the lessons and routines even sharper. "Better never stops" is certainly true of the River team.

### **Phones**

I attach a link to an article from the Financial Times regarding research on the link between smartphones and mental health in teenagers. Whilst I am not going to prescribe to you what to give your children in the way of phones it is certainly worth considering your position as a parent and whether a smart phone is necessary. River Academy being phone free is a 'game changer' in terms of behaviour. both in lessons and at lunchtimes, and it is a pleasure to see our students 'in the moment' and focused on the real-world.

### **Attendance**

Thank you all so much for your support with attendance. Our attendance rate is still over 97% which is brilliant and says much about both your attitude to school along with the students wanting to come in. Please do keep up the good work- every day out of school is an opportunity lost for progress and these days easily add up.

### **Homework and Sparx**

Homework rates continue to be strong and our Sparx score last week of 90% put us just outside the top 100 of 2400 schools which was pleasing. As I write this on Thursday evening, the completion rate is already 70% for the week but I really want it to be 100%. Exposing students to the regular practice outside of lessons is a wonderful way to build knowledge and confidence with Maths so please can I urge all parents to check if the work has been done and hopefully too the XP extra work.

However, we do have 16 students in Catch Up Club this evening for two homeworks missed in the previous week. Our homework is always about knowledge and supports the lesson learning. We don't ask parents to go to Hobbycraft and it is never a test of your baking skills or the depth of your stationary drawer, it is work to support the learning that goes on in the classroom. Therefore, please can you ensure that you sit with your

child and check their home learning folder and the My Child at School App to make sure it is up to date.

### **Interhouse competition**

There has been great participation in all our clubs this week and I am excited for Friday morning's interhouse sports competition. Everyone gets to take part, everyone is involved, and teams have been fairly drawn up so it will be great to see how our new houses of Thames, Pang, Loddon, Kennet, Lambourn and Holy Brook fare in the girls' football and boys touch rugby competitions.

### **PTA**

Thank you to those parents who came to our PTA meeting on Tuesday. There will be some pings on the parents WhatsApp and Facebook groups about that coming through. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the students and the school raising money for projects however we probably need about 25 parents involved if this is going to happen, both as the committee and as volunteers. The undertaking won't necessarily be huge but there some easy opportunities to make money such as the Festival which seem too good to miss out on.

### **Parent Forum**

I also look forward to seeing you at our Parent Forum on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm. We will be discussing the term so far and our ideas for moving forwards and looking for your input.

### **Half term**

Please be reminded that we break up at the end of the day on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> for half term and students return to school on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Pantomime**

**So boys and girls.... we ARE going to the panto!** What an exciting first ever River Academy school trip! To those who have already signed their child up and paid – thank you very much, for those who are yet to, please do so as soon as possible.

Have a great weekend, take care and stay safe.



Andy Hartley  
Headteacher