



RIVER ACADEMY Issue 8

Headteacher's Update

15 November 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone has had a good week and I hope you'll agree that it has been lovely to see the sunshine again.



Richfield Garden Centre

You will see this week and the next few weeks will see our newsletter sponsored by Richfield Garden Centre. Harry and his team at the garden centre have kindly agreed to supply River Academy with a Christmas tree and we are incredibly grateful for this act of generosity. Please do visit the garden centre if you are looking for a tree or any other festive foliage!

Remembrance

On Monday morning we took 2 minutes to remember the fallen of conflicts throughout history. The students listened beautifully to a reading of 'In Flanders Fields' before respecting the two minutes silence with unanimous silence.



Celebration Assembly

We had another fantastic Celebration Assembly last week with some great winners and a lovely atmosphere of celebration and success. The highlights for me, as ever, was the Headteacher's award, this week won by Saanvi, but also the many students who have had to work hard to adjust to our River Way but our now flourishing under our systems and routines.



Lecture



I am incredibly grateful to Miss Angel for organising our recent community lecture. 27 students stayed till 5pm on Friday along with a similar number of staff, members of the public, parents and friends of the school to hear a really interesting lecture from Dr Dan on Berkshire between the wars. It was wonderful to see the students' making notes, asking questions with such academic curiosity along with delivering introductions and 'thank yous' so confidently. We will do further lectures throughout the year, but this was a great start to our series.

Sparx and homework



As I write on Friday morning the Sparx completion rate for this week is currently 59%. Last week 91% of our students completed the work on time which led to us being ranked as 60th school out of the 2400 Sparx schools in the country. However, I really want all the students to complete their work and if possible, do the extra XP and Target tasks. The students who are committing to this every week see the tangible

benefits in their maths lessons. However, I am really pleased that we have such a high completion rate every week and it speaks highly of the positive push that parents are giving at home for which we are all grateful.

Setting

I have received some parental enquiries regarding setting for Maths and English. It is always tricky to put sets together for secondary schools and we had to use the evidence of the first three weeks alongside the SAT data we had. However, we were missing around twenty students' data either because of students not sitting SATs or because primary schools didn't upload the correct transfer information. This made our job even more difficult and uncertain. However, as I promised at the Parent Welcome meeting, the sets will be frequently evaluated based on daily and weekly progress

checks alongside assessment information. It is our intention that the next set change will happen at the end of this term and students will start in their new sets in early 2025. As mentioned previously, we have a bright cohort of students and therefore Set 1 and 2 have both been working at an accelerated pace following very similar content.

Parking

Way back in September, I did ask if parents could avoid using the school car park as I wanted to limit the amount of traffic using this space as students arrive to school. Whilst a few cars have been using it, the majority of parents have adhered to my instruction and have been using the Garden Centre for picking up and dropping off and I am grateful for this. However, I have been upset to hear through parents that there are one or two drivers who are not only driving into the school car park but are also doing so at a speed well in excess of what is safe for a school car park. If people are unable to respect the school environment and persist in endangering others, I may have to ban certain cars from the school grounds. Thank you for your support in this matter.

Pavement widening and railings



As you can see from the photo, the railings outside the school entrance along with the widened street paving have been completed this week to the west of our pedestrian entrance, The pavement to the east of school will be completed in the weeks following but I am delighted at these improvements in our safety.

Assembly



We had a wonderful assembly delivered by Mrs Clarke on Wednesday. Mrs Clarke spoke about anti-bullying awareness. She made clear connections between our school values of Community, Empathy, and Respect in particular and how we must look after each other if we want to limit bullying.

She also discussed the link between bullying and reduced academic attainment which is why, as a school, we need to be really clear on the consequences for the bully and have already had to take strong action towards two students.

However, I would like to be clear that the official definition of bullying talks about repetitive and sustained incidents. We have had the term bandied around from a couple of parents and a number of students that have spoken of bullying but upon investigation, it is short-lived unkindness and although unacceptable and sanctionable, it is not bullying.

Student success factors

Some of the material Mrs Clarke used in her assembly came from a recent DFE report on factors affecting attainment at secondary school. Whilst there are a myriad of factors in this report, the role of positive, engaged parenting is one factor that is particularly highlighted. If parents can support the school in terms of homework, attendance, and the ethos of the school, it will clearly allow the student to prosper and feel confident in the school that they attend. This in turn leads to much improved academic outcomes. Parenting of teenagers is far from easy and there will always be bumps in the road, but ultimately if we can sustain the excellent start we have made in terms of school, student, and home working our students will continue to prosper.

End of term awards and festive concert

We will be holding an end of term awards ceremony and concert at 6pm on Wednesday 18th December. We will share more details nearer the time, but I wanted to make sure you pencil in the River community event commemorating the end of our first term as a school.

Best wishes and have a lovely weekend

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a light blue or grey ink and includes a small flourish at the end.

Andy Hartley

Headteacher