



Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone is well and is able to withstand the buffeting from Storm Darragh this weekend.

It has been another really good week at River Academy with student attendance rallying after our mini pandemic two weeks ago and being back up to 97% again on Thursday.

In addition, there have been some very strong indicators of just how well the school is doing.

DFE Termly Inspection and Visitors and feedback.

I had the pleasure of showing Ms Audsley around earlier this week. She is our new Computer Science teacher who starts with us after Christmas. Her feedback on the quiet, calm, focused, and consistent classrooms was refreshing. Ms Audsley is currently at another local secondary school and can't wait to begin with us, as she described River as a school where "lessons start on time, students listen and smile, and where students seem to genuinely care about their work and their progress."

This was followed by our termly Department for Education visit on Thursday. In our first year of opening, we get termly visits to ensure all is going well and in line with statutory expectations. The inspector met with students, a staff panel, Ms Billingham and I, our SENCO Ms Clarke, and attended Trust and governance meetings. It was a full day of questions and observations, but it went incredibly well. Indeed, when inspectors use phrases like 'groundbreaking', 'superb', and 'incredibly high standards of teaching and learning across the school', you cannot but feel proud. The learning walk I took with the inspector was fantastic, with students completely committed to their learning in Music, PE, English, History, or Science, giving answers that demonstrated wonderfully high levels of thought, knowledge, and understanding with incredibly high levels of instruction from the staff. The inspector also saw our line-ups, poetry recital, and tutor reading, and was very impressed by the smart, proud, and consistently positive students. They were a credit to the school and their families.

Merits and Demerits

I just wanted to give you a quick update on merits and demerits as we reach the end of Week 13 of the term. So far, the students have achieved 81,000 merits between them (approximately 433 each on average) with just over 2,700 (14 each on average) demerits. That is approximately 30 merits for every demerit and exemplifies the fantastic work of the students. We make no excuses about our low tolerance for off-task or poor behaviour; however, we also place huge importance on catching the students getting it right and promoting those positive habits that will lead to academic and social success in later years.

The students love getting merits, and their faces and eruptions of delight when we reveal the Merit League Table each Friday are a weekly joy to behold.

Meet the Tutor Evening

I'm glad we now have 70% of you signed up for our evening next Thursday and look forward to meeting you. The event will give you a proper opportunity to connect with your son/daughter's tutor and discuss their progress in a holistic sense.

For those of you who haven't yet booked, the link is here:

<https://riveracademy.schoolcloud.co.uk/>

Assembly

What are the benefits of reading?

Reading for pleasure at the ages of 10 and 16 has a substantial effect on a child's cognitive scores in vocabulary, spelling, and mathematics at age 16. *Sullivan, A. and Brown, M. (2013)*

- Improves your vocabulary
- Develops empathy and creativity
- Supports self-esteem and mental wellbeing
- Helps build healthy routines and habits

Research from The Book Trust.

What will we do to help you?

- Tutor reading programme
- The River Way – reading with a ruler
- Booklets
- Exposure to lots of different texts
- Reading interventions

Even more to come in the new year!

Ms Myers, our Head of English delivered a wonderful assembly on the joy of reading this week. A parent asked me earlier in the week if the students ever read at school, which I was surprised to hear. These slides recap the opportunities we provide the students, and after Christmas, you will see the arrival of Sparx Reader for even greater reading opportunities. In total, our students read for at least an hour of dedicated and silent reading time each week, with any academic reading completed in lessons in addition to this.

Celebration Assembly

Last week, Ivan received the Headteacher's Award for his superb progress and attention to his studies across the term. Ivan didn't find the rigour of River easy in the first few weeks but has shown wonderful determination and effort to turn things around, both hugely increasing his merits and significantly reducing his demerits. Indeed, he sits in the top 10 of all our students for XP points on Sparx. Great work, Ivan!

Electives

This week saw the final week of the Elective programme for this term. Next week we are at the panto, and the following week we have decided, given the darkness, that we will not be holding these sessions. Therefore, on Wednesday 18th December, we will finish at 3.35pm.

River Academy End of Term Concert and Awards

We will be holding an informal end of term concert and celebration on Wednesday 18th December at 6pm - 7.15pm. Attendance will be by invitation, with around 80 students receiving or being nominated for awards, along with another 20 students performing during the evening. It is always hard to decide who to invite to these occasions, but those who have been invited should know just how well they've done to receive an invitation at such a high-performing school.

Sparx

Last week, our completion rate of 93% put us at the 50th ranked school in the country.

As you will know, we have changed our deadline for Sparx this week and as I finish my newsletter on Friday morning, we are on a completion percentage of 96% already! This means only 6 students will need to stay to complete their work at the end of the day so thank you so much for your parental support in this matter. Amazing stuff!!

Statistically the students work on Sparx has been very strong indeed with 333,000 questions answered and 2552 hours of work spent on Sparx by the 180 students since September 20th. Wow!!

We are intent that no student falls behind and that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically. Given the brilliant percentage of completion, I am delighted so many of you are supporting us in our pursuit of this aim.

Kit Sponsorship

As we begin to play more fixtures, we are excited to offer local companies the opportunity to sponsor our kits. In return, we will promote your company through social media, newsletters, and exposure at school events. Please contact me or our Head of PE, Joe Clare, at river@maidnerleghtrust.org to discuss further. We look forward to partnering with you!

Fixtures



The boys' football team did well on Tuesday, getting knocked out on penalties in the Quarter Finals from 16 schools competing in the Reading schools' 5-a-side championship. Well played to all the boys but special mentions to Sean, Aryan, and Luke who were outstanding throughout.

The girls' team have been gaining momentum each week, and this week they won against Maiden Erlegh School and Prospect, although they sustained a narrow defeat to Denefield. Well done to Nadia and Shakira, our goal scorers, and hats off to all the girls for their camaraderie, community, and determination.

PTA

Thank you to those parents who attended the PTA meeting on Tuesday (or contacted me to express their interest). We now need to call an AGM, adopt a constitution, and appoint a committee. This will then allow us to open a bank account and obtain charitable status. From here, we can raise some money! I will be writing more fully regarding this matter early next week.

Lastly, students end of term reports will be available through the My Child At School app on Wednesday along with further information that explains it.

Stay safe and enjoy the weekend, and please say well done to your children for working so hard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

Andy Hartley

Headteacher