



## Headteacher's Update

10<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year from everyone here at River Academy, to you our parent community. I hope everyone had a safe and positive time across the school holiday.

### The January relaunch

We have come back to school this week and have endured a sharp spell of cold weather however, this hasn't dampened spirits or changed our routines and expectations. On Monday we began the week with an extended tutor time, reminding students of our expectations and how they can excel at school, and this was supplemented by the introduction of two areas we wish to build on for 2025. The first is oracy, that is the student's ability to speak and communicate in and out of the classroom and for this we will be using the acronyms **SHAPE** and **ABCQ** to guide our practice.

The second is around manners and making sure our students present themselves with respect and integrity at all times. For this, we will be using the acronym **STEPS** to support our students. In both cases this is about developing the student's transferable skills and their self-awareness, both of which are vital qualities both at school and beyond.



#### STEPS

##### Polite and Respectful

<b>S</b>	Sir / Miss
<b>T</b>	Thank you
<b>E</b>	Excuse me
<b>P</b>	Please
<b>S</b>	Smile

#### SHAPE

##### Confident and Clear

<b>S</b>	Sentences
<b>H</b>	Hands
<b>A</b>	Articulate
<b>P</b>	Projection
<b>E</b>	Eyes

#### ABCQ

##### Formal and Extended

<b>A</b>	Add
<b>B</b>	Build
<b>C</b>	Contest
<b>Q</b>	Question

The work we put in with the students seems to have had an impact with only one student being removed from lessons by Friday breaktime. It has also been noticeable how keen the students are to greet us and bid us farewell in the evening. It's one of the things that make River Academy a special place to work.

Our new poem has also been introduced. Ms Billingham did a sterling job of presenting the new poem to the students not only in terms of content but also context. The poem is 'If' by Rudyard Kipling and whilst it is a poem of advice from a father to a son it is also a life lesson in accepting the rollercoaster of fortune that accompanies everyone's life journey. The word stoicism was used and teaching our young people to accept that difficult things will happen, but it is important to move forward from these events and 'go again'. Ms Billingham referenced that at school successes will also be accompanied by some less successful times and students must reflect, dust themselves down and move forwards. The poems patriarchal language was also discussed and the historical context in which it was produced was clarified so that students could apply the key messages whatever their gender.

A copy of the poem is in the student's planner for this half-term, but a copy is below along with the You Tube video we used with the students when we launched with them on Monday. Please do support your son or daughter in the learning of this poem over the next few weeks.

[If - Poem by Rudyard Kipling - YouTube](#)

## Poem 3 – If, by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

### PTA

I hope we will be seeing some of you on Tuesday at 6pm to help elect our PTA committee for the rest of the academic year. The meeting will also see the adoption of a constitution and in doing this we can then gain legal status and therefore insurance for any events the PTA organise. The meeting will also finalise the events and fundraising priorities for the rest of the year.

### Breakfast at River

From Monday we will be providing a limited breakfast menu as a trial. A number of parents have mentioned this since we opened in September and whilst I have wanted it to happen, I have not had the contracted hours available from my catering team. However, we have now managed to adjust

budgets, and this will start from 13.1.25. Items will be on sale from 8.35 until 9.00am and will include pastries, porridge and hot chocolate. Any student that is deemed as Pupil Premium will be entitled to a pastry or porridge each day.

## **PGL**

Thank you to those of you have responded regarding our PGL trip in July. For those that haven't yet please see the attached letter and a link to the form [here](#) and a reminder that we need your declarations of interest by Monday.

## **Sparx**



We achieved a global ranking of 4th for the week before the holiday on Sparx Maths (out of 2600 schools!). 98% of homework tasks were completed. I think you'll agree this is quite something and my thanks to all of you and the staff for supporting the students to ensure no-one misses out or falls behind. Watch this space for details of **Sparx Reader** coming out soon!

## **Computer Science**

Ms Audsley, our new Computer Science teacher started with us this week and we used her first two days to induct her and let her see The River Way in action. The students will begin in Computer Science on Monday and these lessons will replace the previous Sparx session the students had on their timetable.

## **Assessment week**



Next week is our Assessment Week. I hope the students can all spend some time looking at knowledge organisers, previous work and content lists to ensure they are ready for the tests they will sit next week. All of the students have a grid of which subjects have tests on which days. Additionally, all of the students and parents were e-mailed by Ms Billingham on December 19<sup>th</sup> with a list of examination content.

Therefore, I hope the students can make sure they are organised and ready to go for Monday. Given how hard so many of them have worked since they joined us in September, this is their time to shine! However, we will also make sure we spend plenty of time reflecting on the exams and how students can improve and move forward, be it through further knowledge acquisition or better technique and skills.

## Recruitment Event

**MAIDEN ERLEGH TRUST**

**Secondary and Special/Alternative Provision Recruitment Event**

**Save the date**  
Wednesday 29 January 2025  
5:00pm until 6:30pm

**Venue**  
Maiden Erlegh School in Reading,  
81 Crescent Rd, Reading RG1 5SL

*Come along and speak with teaching and support staff colleagues about what it is like to work as part of our central team or in one of our secondary and/or special/AP schools.*

[www.maidenerleghtrust.org](http://www.maidenerleghtrust.org)

Granbury College | Hamilton School | MAIDEN ERLEGH | MAIDEN ERLEGH | MAIDEN ERLEGH | OAK TREE SCHOOL | RIVER ACADEMY

Lastly, if anyone is looking for a new role and is interested in working for the Maiden Erlegh Trust, please do come along to our recruitment event in a few weeks. River Academy is advertising a range of roles from next week focusing on teaching initially with our support staff roles going live after Easter.

Take care and have a great weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Hartley  
Headteacher