



Headteacher's Update

17th January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

The evenings seem to be getting lighter which is heartening, certainly when I left the rowing club at 4.30pm with my band of merry oarsmen and women it was still light on the walk back to River which lifted the mood.

Pavements

Our pavement widening carries on along Richfield Avenue, phase by phase and it definitely feels safer for the students to walk along the road on the widened areas. Eventually both sides will be widened all the way up to the Caversham Bridge roundabout.

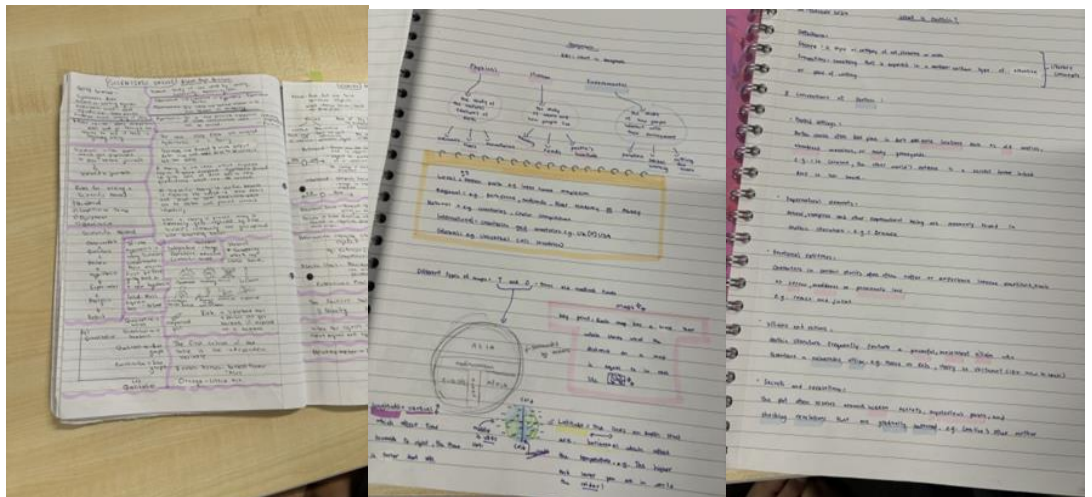
PTA

Our PTA held its inaugural AGM on Tuesday and I am pleased to report that a committee was formed with Carol Van Wijngaarde as Chairperson, along with Gill Featherstone, Isobel Grainger and Mr Maalik (Nabils dad) as the other committee members. The process of setting up a bank account and gaining charitable status can now occur.

Carol will be putting in two more meetings during the year to discuss fundraising and events etc. Please do look out for her e-mails and please do contribute your time and support so that we can raise some more money for the school.

Assessment Week

This 'event' has been a great success, and we have been bowled over by the lengths the students have gone to in order to prepare for their papers. The students' conduct has so far been exemplary and clearly the messages



of why we are undergoing this process and how it can help them to consolidate their long-term understanding of topics has been heard loud and clear by the vast majority of students. Students will receive their results on February 6. Parents will also be notified of all the results on this day

Celebration Assembly

I was delighted to present my award this week to Kornelia who has undergone a renaissance since the October half-term, and we have seen a more focused and studious student who is making huge academic progress because of her much-improved approach to school. Rosalind is receiving her Head of Year award from Miss Morre for being an all-round student and member of the River community. The last picture shows the intense competition of a rock paper scissors battle to settle which tutor group had the highest attendance. The intensity of concentration from Jess and Ayaan is quite something!!



Recruitment of staff

As mentioned last week, please be reminded of the Maiden Erlegh Trust Recruitment Fair being held at Maiden Erlegh School in Reading on Crescent Road on January 29th.

This week we interviewed for our new Head of Year position and had another strong field despite the adverse conditions for teacher recruitment. More news on this next week!

It is good to see many of you have signed up for our Year 7 parent open morning on January 22nd (over 30 as I write this) and we look forward to seeing you there.

Homework

At River Academy we are determined that no students fall behind. As you may recall, we tweaked our Sparx Maths hand in day to Friday to allow us to support any incomplete work to be finished at Catch Up Club each Friday. Similarly, we have noticed a hand in rate for all homework of around 90%. So far, we have supported students to complete this work as they gain the habits of independent study. However, we now feel students have had chance to get used to our expectations and our support network of homework clubs, a quiet space at lunch and strong teacher relationships mean students should be able to complete all of their homework all of the time.

It is also worth mentioning, our homework is not finishing off or constructing a volcano from papier mache but is work that complements and supports the curriculum so that by completing the work students are strengthening their exposure to the material and hopefully becoming familiar with the facts so they can spend the lesson time applying the knowledge. As a famous educationalist Daniel Willingham said, "Thought is the residue of memory", that is, we can only solve problems, analyse and evaluate if we understand the context.

Therefore, we are tweaking our homework policy so that any student who does not hand in their homework on the correct day will stay behind to complete the work and stay up to date. Next week is a gentle week for homework following the assessment week so it will give the students a week to get used to it and we will keep reminding them that they need to stay up to date.

The Canteen

Our breakfast club has launched nicely this week with lots of hot chocolates and warm pastries and porridge consumed after a chilly walk in. Please do use this facility if it helps with childcare and getting into work etc

We have also got two tills operating for lunchtime now which means we can process our meals more quickly and the students get longer for free time. As I said in September when some parents were questioning our dining systems, some of the things that will happen are organic and we amend and improve as we see how they operate, and this is a good example of that.

Our question for Wednesday lunch was:

"Would you rather be a member of royalty 1000 years ago or an average person today". It provoked some fantastic answers, and you may want to use as a topic for discussion around your own family dinner table.

Have a great weekend everyone!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a dark ink and features a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Andy Hartley
Headteacher