



Headteacher's Update

21 March 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are all well and have enjoyed the week.

We have had another busy week with many exciting events.

Matt Rodda

Matt Rodda, the local MP visited us on Friday morning. Matt was supposed to come before we opened but the election was called just before the visit and as a school, we must not show any political bias, so we had to cancel. However, now Matt is the sitting MP it was a

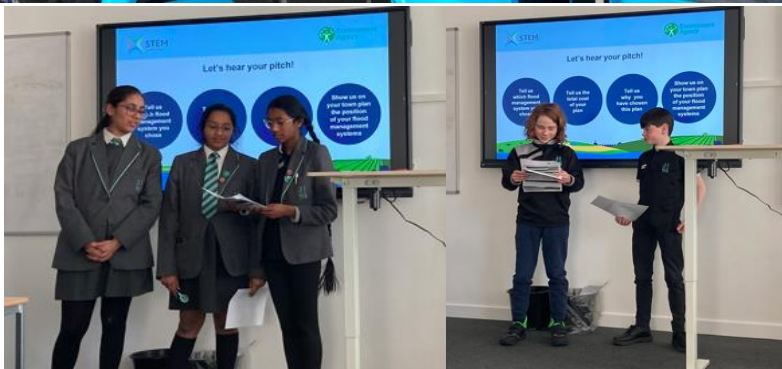


delight to show him around our wonderful school.

He was fascinated by our approach to education and it was reassuring to receive his endorsement of the way we have set the school up to ensure all students get the chance to learn and succeed.

Climate Change workshop

On Tuesday Dr Dukinfield hosted a climate change workshop with 25 students planning and discussing how to manage the risks of our changing weather for an imaginary settlement. This is the sixth different extra academic activity we have held this term, and the participation and enthusiasm has been



fantastic. Indeed, we have tracked all of the student's participation in extracurricular activities and are so pleased that 82% of our students have done an extra-curricular activity (and this doesn't include our Wednesday Elective programme).








Book Fair

I am indebted to Ms Myers for organising our book fair this week. It has been lovely to see our students really enthused by the possibility of buying books to take home and read. Thank you also to all the parents who came to books on Thursday after school or have bought books from the students wish lists. All of this will help the school to purchase more books to stock our library.



Community Lecture

Please do come along to our community lecture next week. These are excellent events that foster a love of learning for all our stakeholders. Please do pass this on to family and friends too who may find it of interest.

| | |
|--|--|
|  <h2 style="color: #4CAF50;">Community Lectures</h2> <p>A new series of FREE public lectures open to all</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p>Join Prof. Aston who will explore recent archaeological evidence to reconsider ancient Greek attitudes to animals and help us decide if Greek attitudes towards animals were not nearly as coldly practical as we may once have chosen to believe!</p> </div> </div> <p>Professor Emma Aston University of Reading</p> <p>Lecture: The role of pets in ancient Greek life</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p>No need to register - everyone welcome!</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p>The chance to meet academics and ask questions!</p> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Free termly academic lectures for the school and wider community</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>Tuesday 25th March 4-5pm Arrive by 3.45pm</p> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;">   </div> |  <h2 style="color: #4CAF50;">Community Lectures</h2> <p>A new series of FREE public lectures open to all</p> <p>Lecture: The role of pets in ancient Greek life</p> <p><i>Put the phrase 'pet stroller' into your favourite search-engine, and countless hits appear, most of them advertisements for comfy, stylish buggies in which your pet can ride in luxury as you push it through the streets or the park. Of course this phenomenon can meet practical requirements, as well as the disinclination of a pampered pug to let its paws touch the pavement, but overall it is a certainly a sign of the role of domestic animals in twenty-first century Britain: never have pets - dogs especially - been more intimately integrated into human households, as full family members, their value on a par with that of their human care-givers.</i></p> <p><i>What would the ancient Greeks have thought of this? About twenty years ago, most historians have said: Not much. The ancient Greek attitude to animals used to be viewed through the lens of utility: either an animal was useful to humanity, or else it was a pest (and was dealt with accordingly). More recently, however, we have started to reconsider this assumption with regard to companion animals. Archaeological evidence has produced clear signs of pets being lovingly tended, far beyond what the principle of usefulness would seem to dictate; and we may look afresh at texts and artefacts which plainly represent an emotional bond between human and non-human animals, telling us that Greek attitudes towards animals were not nearly as coldly practical as we may once have chosen to believe.</i></p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>Tuesday 25th March 4-5pm Arrive by 3.45pm</p> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;">   </div> |
|--|--|



There are now extra rewards for your hard work in Sparx!

Early Completion Merits
Complete Sparx by Tues morning
5 merits

Extra Mile Merits
600 SRP / XP & Independent
5 merits

Sparx

The Sparx programme continues to be very successful with River Academy being the highest ranked school for Reader and Maths combined for the 5th week in a row with completion rates of 98 and 99%. It is also pleasing that so so many students completed their work early and also did the extra work to gain extra merits.

Sport

Our netballers have benefitted from this outstanding commitment to going beyond the curriculum and they completed another victory this week defeating Blessed Hugh Faringdon School 6-1. This is now 6 victories out of 6 and we are incredibly proud of them and also salute the leadership of Coach Moore in this successful campaign. The girls now go on to the final next Tuesday.

Sadly, the footballers could not do as well with narrow defeats against league leaders, Little Heath, along with an unfortunate defeat versus Blessed Hugh 1-0 courtesy of a deflected own goal.

Thursday evening saw twenty students participate in the schools indoor rowing championships. Reading Rowing Club brought up their erg machines and the students gave it their absolute best to travel as far as possible in two minutes



Attendance

Attendance has been strong again this week, pushing towards 97% which is pleasing and thank you for your support in this matter. There was a report published recently, which makes clear links between attendance and achievement in school. I realise attendance is always contextualised and there are often good reasons for absence, but undoubtedly strong attendance habits help students to succeed in school.

[The link between attendance and attainment in an assessment year](#)

Adolescence

If you haven't seen the much-discussed Netflix hit, *Adolescence*, please do take some time to watch it. As a parent myself, and as a headteacher, the program resonated about the dangers of social media and how it can influence teenage attitudes to the wider world. It is food for thought on whether to allow your children apps such as Instagram and Tik Tok on their phones, where much of this unfiltered opinion swirls through their feeds each day.

As an aside, you will be pleased to know that the school portrayed in Episode 2 is far removed from River Academy!



Parent and surveys

Just a friendly reminder to please complete the Annual Parent Survey, the closing date has been extended to Friday 28 March. The link can be found here:

<https://www.river-academy.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=175&type=pdf>

Your views are important to us. By completing the survey, you will help us to understand what matters most to you and your child; every response contributes to making our schools the best they can be.

End of term

Just a reminder that we finish at 3.15pm on Thursday 3rd of April and that Friday 4th April is an INSET day.

Have a wonderful weekend everyone!

Take care and best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads 'A. Hartley'.

Andy Hartley

Headteacher