



RIVER ACADEMY

Year 8 Parent Welcome Evening

September 25th 2025



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Be Inclusive



Work Together



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The purpose of this evening



To share with you some of our excitement of what is happening at River Academy



To give you insights into the curriculum and how your child can be successful as a River Academy student in Year 8



For you to meet some of our key staff and put faces to names



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Key staff

- Mr Andy Hartley- Headteacher
- Mrs Laura Billingham – Deputy Headteacher
- Mr Jamie Rosser- Head of Year 8
- Tutors!



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The last days of term!





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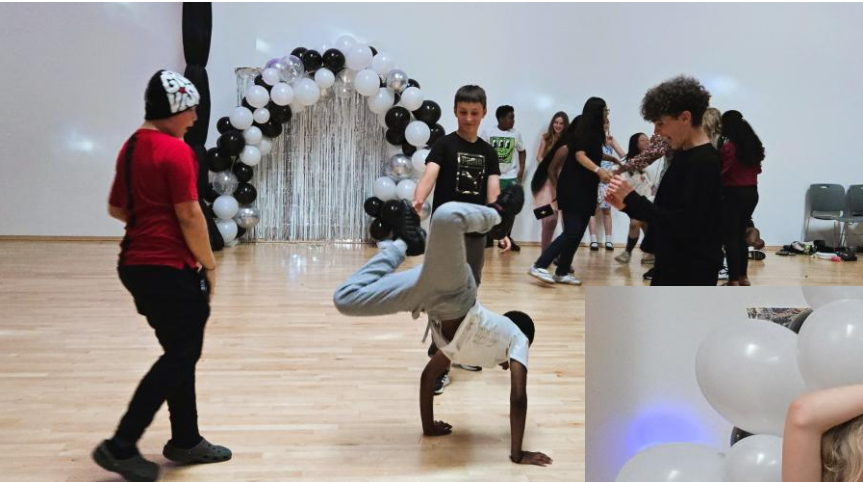


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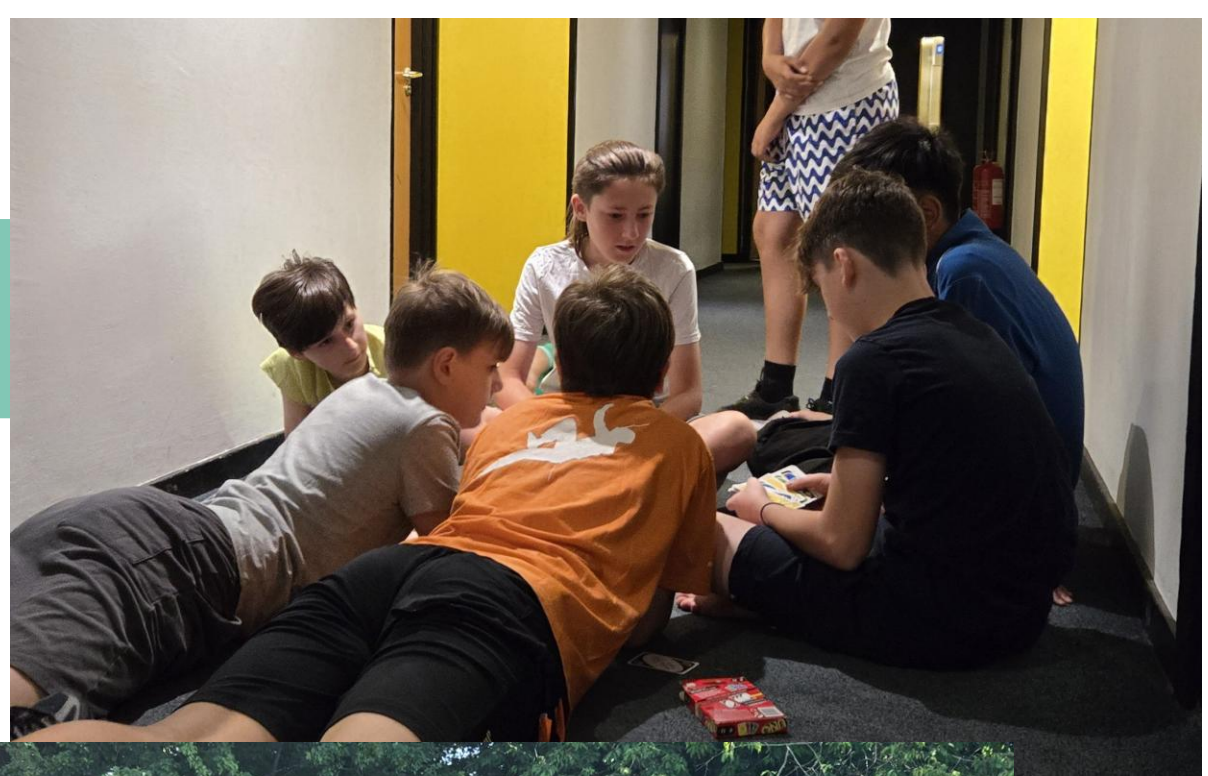


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Metrics from last year

- Reading age test showed the school had improved from the **53rd percentile to the 72nd percentile** over the course of Year 7. All subgroups made good progress, especially the weaker readers.
- Year 7 cross-trust assessment performance was very impressive!
- Overall student attendance – 95.2%
- SEND students thriving- attendance (10% above national) and progress accelerated
- Junior Maths Challenge- 66% of participants gained awards
- Student engagement in Sparx Maths/Sparx Reader – Top 5 in the country every week out of 2900 schools
- Girls' Sport – 65% turn out and Reading Netball League winners
- Waiting list for September - 40+ and 13 appeals
- External interest – Visits most weeks from fellow educators



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The Year 8 dip

- Year 8 is often associated with
- A dip in work ethic
- A decline in uniform standards
- A dip in behavioural standards
- A reduction in homework and expectations

- But this is River Academy...

Year 8 Pastoral Team

Head of Year – **Mr Rosser**

Thames – **Mr Woodfine**

Kennet – **Ms Baker**

Pang – **Ms Strong**

Loddon – **Mr Fasham**

Lambourne – **Ms Angell**

Avon – **Mr Clare**



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Pastoral Care and Support

Form Tutor- The Form Tutor is your first point of contact.

Head of Year- Serious matters or concerns

Behaviour Support/ Family Liaison Worker- to share a problem

Student Services- If you are feeling unwell

External agencies when appropriate

Reach out if you feel your child needs some extra support in and around school

NB: Whilst we make every effort to respond as quickly as possible, the school has a policy to respond within 3 working days.

Welcome to Year 8!



OR



Welcome to Year 8!

OR



?

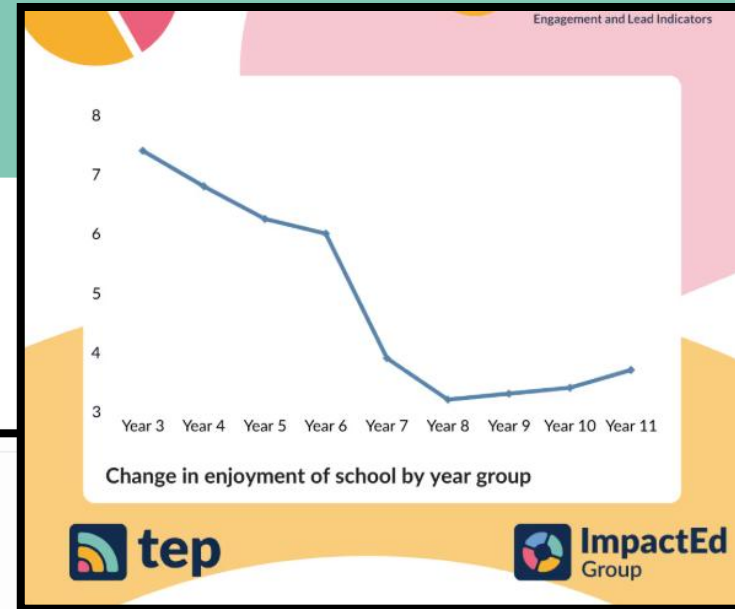


Key Stage 3: the wasted years?



Year 7 marks a steep and lasting drop in engagement:

- Pupils' average school enjoyment score drops from around 6.0 in Year 6 to 3.8 in Year 7, then falls further to 3.2 in Year 8.
- Headline engagement – which includes willingness to recommend and return to the school – follows the same downward trend and never fully recovers in secondary years.



This is a national problem.

It is one we are prepared for.

The Big Dip?

1. Lack of Priority

- Year 11 come first
- Timetabling, interventions, funding, time

2. Lack of Challenge

- Low expectations
- Repeating not developing

3. Poor Teaching and Learning

- Non-specialists
- Split classes

4. Lack of Purpose and Value

- No external assessments or validation
- Disconnected from outcomes

The River Reality



NOT THIS.

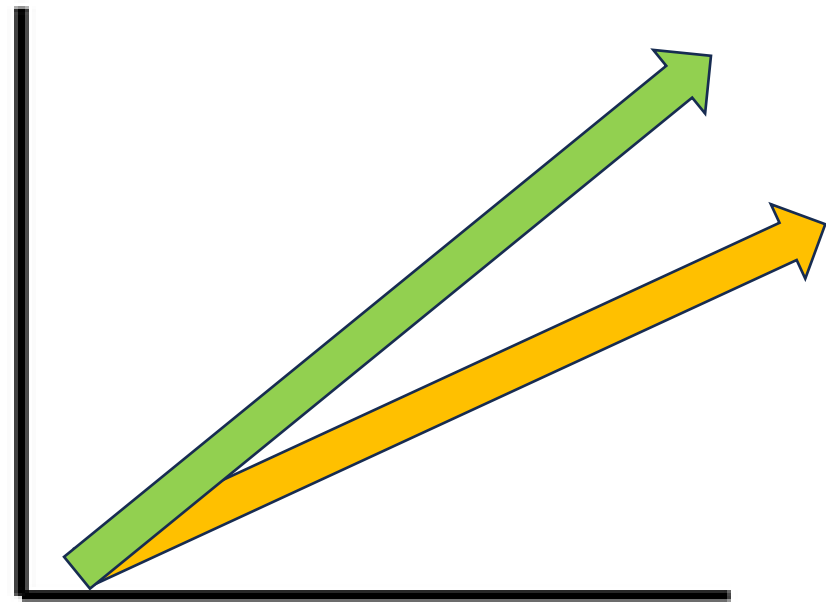
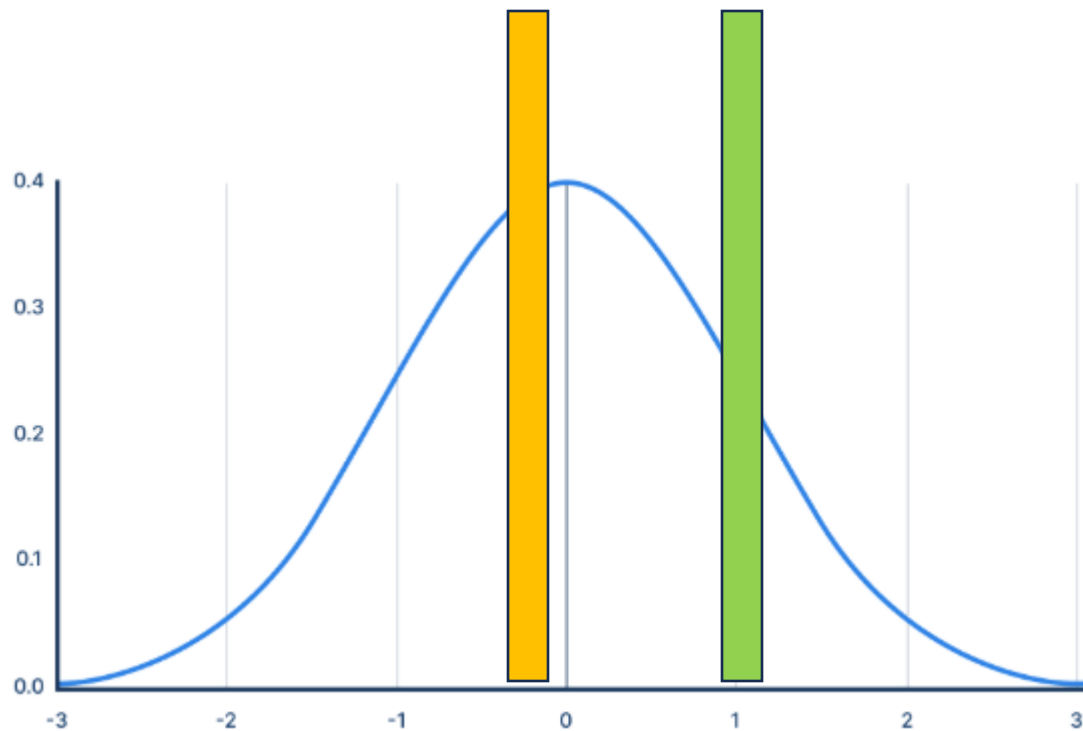


BUT THIS.

Raising our Game

1. **Priority:** Leadership, Celebration, Opportunity, ‘Everyone noticed; everyone known’.
2. **Challenge:** Rigorous and sequential curriculum – ‘GCSE Ready!’, Reading (inc mature themes), an expectation of retention. ‘Do it again; do it better.’
3. **Teaching and Learning:** 100% Participation and Engagement, heightened expectations from Sparx, Structured Study Support sessions.
4. **Purpose and Value:** The Why?, ‘The River Way’ – this is how we do it. **This is who we are.**

We know that what we do, works.





The River Way

Developing our knowledge, skills and character...



...so that we can go on to lead happy, successful
lives, as drivers of our own destinies.

The River Way – Character Education

- High standard = high outcomes.
- Sweat the small stuff – uniform, equipment, punctuality.
- 100% effort from 100% of students 100% of the time.
- Attendance matters.
- Manners matter.
- Students are ready, respectful and safe



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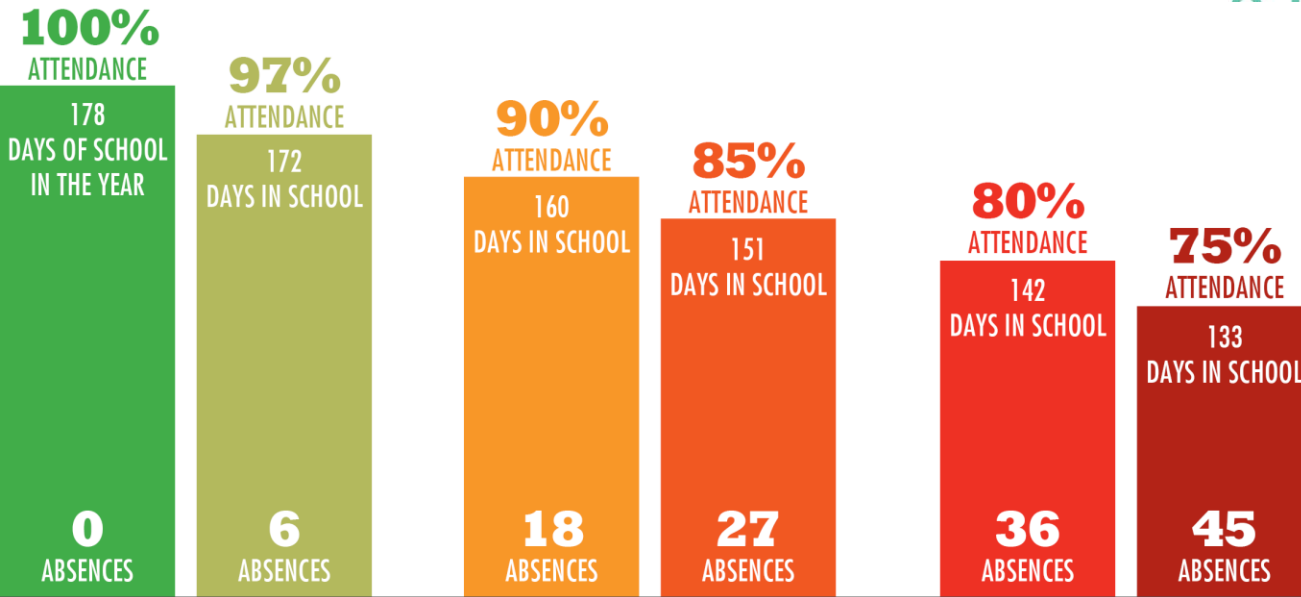
Our Values



How the River Way supports learners with SEND

- Consistency across every lesson offers reassurance throughout the day
- Orderly transitions minimise sensory overload
- Calm compliance in class maximises focus and attention
- Quiet focus ensures learning is accessible to all
- **Be Seen Looking** teacher scanning and circulating can anticipate and redirect misunderstandings
- Clear instructions minimise confusion
- **Turn and Talk** alleviates social pressure
- Modelling positive behaviours promotes improved social interactions
- **Ruler Reading** scaffolds text accessibility for weak readers
- **Choral Response** provides safety in numbers
- **All Hands Up** avoids perceptions of injustice

Attendance



We're impressed!

GOOD ATTENDANCE
Students who are present in the classroom have a great chance for success!

We're concerned...

CHRONICALLY ABSENT
Students who miss 10% of school or more may show reduced grade point averages and scores.

We're worried!

EXTREMELY ABSENT
Students who miss more than 20% of school are less likely to graduate high school.

- School success starts with attendance. Every school day counts
- If your child is absent from school, we ask that you contact us each morning, *this can be done through MCAS*
- Please book routine GP, Dentist, Orthodontist appointments outside school hours
- We regularly report on student attendance. Identifying patterns of absence is a helpful way for us to assess pastoral issues.
- Our aim is for all students to record attendance above 96%

Below 90% attendance = on average ½ day missed every week.....
Equates to 4 weeks over a school year.

In five years of school that's around half a year's absence

Celebrate the successes

We want to celebrate the Small and Big Wins

- Academic progress
- School values
- Dining and poetry stars
- Tutor nominations
- Subject nominations
- Top merits



Don't forget to celebrate the
small wins

Any win is worth celebrating.

Small wins are signposts that lead to bigger wins, and better habits, later.

New subjects this year

- Drama
- Digital Literacy
- New Personal Development curriculum

Year 8 Leadership

For all students:

- 2 form reps for the student council
- School ambassadors
- Sports ambassadors

Year 8 exclusives:

- Head of Year 8 Rep
- Reading mentors
- Resilience mentors
- Year 8 Baccalaureate

The Year 8 Baccalaureate

What and Why?

- Complete a series of challenges linked to River values.
- Builds independence, experience, confidence and intellectual hunger.
- Healthy competition.
- Complete challenges = gain points.
- Certification and awards for thresholds met.



What can you do?

- Ask your child about their day – successes, challenges.
- Check in with their homework – have they completed SPARX? Do they need to go to homework club? Check in with Class Charts
- Encourage organisation – packing bag the night before.
- Help them develop routines e.g. phone/gaming time.
- Read with them – talk about books.
- Communicate with us.



Phones

- Ask yourself – does my child need a smart phone?
- Studies show an increase in performance from students in schools with strict phone policy – academic, mental health.
- How long is your child on their phone for?
- What apps are they using? Do you/they know the risk?

The Impact:

Distraction & Lower Learning

- Phones disrupt attention — even when just present on the desk.
- Research shows phone bans can raise test scores, especially for struggling students.

Sleep Loss & Mental Health

- Late-night scrolling delays sleep, worsens mood, and raises anxiety.
- Teens who use phones >3 hrs/day are more likely to report depression symptoms.

Online Safety & Cyberbullying

- Risk of bullying, grooming, exposure to harmful content.
- Many apps are anonymous or hard for parents to monitor.

Social Pressure & Comparison

- Constant notifications fuel FOMO (fear of missing out).
- Likes/followers affect self-esteem, leading to stress and social withdrawal.

Working Together

- **Set Phone Curfews** – No phones after X pm, charge devices outside the bedroom.
- **Model Healthy Use** – children copy adults' habits.
- **Talk About Online Safety** – Explain risks, not just rules.
- **Collaborate With School** – Support school phone policies, encourage consistent rules

21st October – How to Parent Teens – invitation and more information will be sent closer to the time.



Our Values

Community

Empathy

Respect

Excellence

Determination

