



Headteacher's Update

17 October 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone has had a good week despite the grey, overcast skies.

Lessons, Drop-ins, Coaching and Feedback

One of the unique aspects of River Academy is how frequently staff are observed. We conduct around 50 drop-ins each week, providing a regular flow of feedback to staff and enabling them to observe their colleagues often—an excellent form of professional development.

As Headteacher, I have the privilege of seeing many lessons each week. Being in classrooms and witnessing our students so focused and engaged in their learning is truly a thrill. I was nervous at the start of term if our system would work for two year groups but this half-term has been incredibly rewarding as we've adapted some practices to accommodate our growing numbers, all while watching our new learners thrive and our Year 8s settle quickly into our routines.

After half-term, we will be holding another **Open Morning** for existing parents. This will be a chance to see the school in action and experience the routines and processes that make River Academy so special. An invitation will be sent out for this, along with details of a **Parent Forum** scheduled just after half-term.

LAMDA

We were fortunate to welcome parent, actress and local resident Sivan Raphaely to school on Thursday morning. Sivan delivered an assembly to both Year 7 and 8 on the possibility of studying LAMDA courses whilst here at River Academy. The details are attached to this mailshot, and I would ask all parents to consider this opportunity seriously. The confidence and self-belief that can come from attending these classes can be transformative on a young person's future.

I was also delighted to receive the following feedback from Sivan regarding her 'River' experience.

The students were incredible; so well-behaved, enthusiastic and responsive. And the teachers were so warm and welcoming.



Equipment


Half-term is a good opportunity to check and ensure your son or daughter has the correct equipment they need for school. Our 'Tools for Learning' list is below, and students are expected to have all of

the items on this list every day. This ensures lessons go smoothly and teachers can focus on teaching rather than acting as a stationer to those students who have arrived in their lessons ill-equipped.

Tools for Learning

You must have the following equipment with you at all times:

- Large transparent pencil case
- Pens – x3 black/blue and x1 green
- HB pencil
- Rubber
- Pencil sharpener
- 30cm ruler
- Protractor
- Highlighters
- Coloured pencils (or pens)
- Glue stick
- Reading book
- Student Planner
- Scientific calculator – we recommend a *Casio FX-83GTCW* calculator
- A3 home learning folder and Home Learning booklets, **including** your Sparx exercise book



You must also have your full P.E. Kit on the days that you have timetabled P.E., as well as your ingredients for Food Technology!

Sport This Week

We've had mixed fortunes in sport this week. The **Year 8 rugby team** secured victories against Emmbrook and Denefield, while **Year 7** faced tough competition and were defeated by The Piggott and Maiden Erlegh—two strong rugby-playing schools. Year 8 girls football saw them playing The Wren and Bohunt School. Regardless of the outcome, our students always play with smiles on their faces and represent River Academy with pride and enthusiasm.



'How to Understand Your Teenager' Evening 21st October, 6pm – Main School Hall

This event is fast approaching, and I encourage you to sign up. It will explore the development of the teenage brain and the challenges of navigating the modern world. As we all know, adolescence brings a flood of hormones that can be difficult to manage at home.

While this evening won't solve every parenting challenge, it will help you ask the right questions and better understand the journey to adulthood. Though designed for parents, **accompanied students are welcome** to attend to gain some self-awareness of their own development.

The session will last around 45 minutes and include time for questions.

[🔗 Click here for a link to the Form for you to sign up](#)

Half-Term Reminder

School finishes on **Tuesday 21st October** at the normal time. Clubs will continue as scheduled unless otherwise instructed. We re-open on **Monday 3rd November at 9:10am**.

Parent Conduct

While this may not apply to many of you, I feel compelled to address the conduct of a few parents—particularly in Year 7, though not exclusively.

We've received several calls and emails questioning every warning or demerit issued. River Academy operates a fair and consistent behaviour system that supports learning in disruption-free classrooms and safe outdoor spaces. It does differ from primary school, but we were clear about our approach during open evenings and open mornings.

Occasionally, students fall short of our high expectations or make mistakes. Overall, however, they conduct themselves well, use lesson time productively, and complete homework to high standards. Our systems are implemented calmly and consistently, helping students succeed. The significant improvement in reading ages and excellent performance in cross-Trust assessments last year are testament to this.

So, I ask two things:

1. **Please consider whether you have all the facts** before emailing us about a detention.
2. **Please do not raise your voice at our staff**, especially the office team. I've instructed them to end calls if this happens again. They are professional, dedicated, and deserve to be treated with respect. They will record your enquiry and pass it on to the appropriate person, where it will be dealt with.

I am privileged to lead River Academy. It is a special place where students work hard, show kindness, and commit to their studies. My staff feel the same. This culture exists because we insist on high standards, celebrate achievements, and support students to be the best version of themselves.

Thank you for your continued support and have a wonderful half-term.

Warm regards,



Andy Hartley

Headteacher