



RIVER ACADEMY Issue 8

Headteacher's Update

7 November 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back! It has been a fantastic first week of the new half term, and I am delighted to share some of the highlights with you.

Re-set

From the outset, our students have returned with excellent behaviour and a powerful sense of purpose—just as we had hoped. We began the week with our traditional re-set: an extended tutor time where students received updates on key processes and reminders of our shared expectations. It was also a valuable opportunity to reflect on the successes of the first half term and to celebrate the many ways in which our students have been truly outstanding.

Community Lecture

On Thursday evening, we hosted our first Community Lecture, delivered by Professor Steve Musson from the University of Reading. His talk, “*Why are there so many new apartments in Reading?*”, explored the evolving landscape of our town centre, including developments like Broad Street Mall and Vastern Road. With over 70 attendees, it was a thought-provoking evening for all involved. A special thank you to students Patrick and Alyssa for their excellent introductions, and to Jake for his closing remarks. Huge thanks also to Ms Angell, whose leadership of our super-curricular academic programme continues to inspire.



Looking ahead, our next event is an online lecture on **18th November**, hosted by Miss Angell: “*Why We Remember World War Two.*” I encourage all students to attend this session, which will explore the philosophical and historical significance of remembrance, more than 80 years on.

Assembly

Continuing the theme of reflection, Miss Angell also delivered two powerful assemblies this week. Year 7 learned about the often-overlooked contributions of Empire soldiers, with a focus on Walter Tull—the British Army’s first Black officer. Year 8 explored the tragic stories of soldiers executed for cowardice, many of whom were suffering from what we now understand as PTSD. These assemblies reminded us that behind every headline lie countless stories of courage, sacrifice, and humanity.

If you would like to explore these themes further at home, here are some recommended links:

- **Local events:** <https://news.reading.gov.uk/remembrance-armistice-events-2025/>

Open Morning and Parent Forum

[Please click here and complete the form if you wish to attend our current Year 7 Open Morning](#), which begins at **9:00 am on Thursday, 13th November**. You will have the chance to observe lessons and line-ups, listen to a short presentation from me, and ask any questions you may have.

In addition, on **Tuesday, 18th November**, we will be holding our Year 7 **Parent Forum** from **6:00 pm – 7:00 pm** in the school hall. [Please click here and complete the linked form to confirm your attendance.](#)

Briym Parent Event – 21.10.25

On **Tuesday, 21st October**, we held our parenting event, attended by around 50 River Academy families. As a parent of a Year 8 student myself, I found the ideas and guidance shared during the evening to be incredibly accurate and thought-provoking, and I have used some of the strategies in the fortnight since then. I have included the key takeaways for you to consider. Good luck!

Key takeaways for parents

- Your child is going through natural changes. You can not stop this but can support it.
- Remembering your own teenage years is important but times have changed.
- Encourage positive choices and actively help make them more possible.
- You will disagree. Compromise is possible.
- The need for a sense of autonomy.



Key takeaways for students

- You are braver and more daring during adolescence, but not invincible.
- You are going to make mistakes. You can recover from them. Own your mistakes.
- The company you keep can influence the kind of person you are.
- You are in control of the kind of the person you become.
- Spend time on the qualities you want to be known for.



PTA Thank You

Many of you will have seen the A5 clear wallets issued to our students this week. These are designed to keep planners clean and dry and protect the pages. I am grateful to Carol and the PTA team, who came up with the idea and funded these wallets. Students will be expected to use them, and we will update the Tools for Learning list accordingly.



Panto

The pantomime trip for Year 7 is happening, and we have been really pleased with the positive financial responses from parents. We value this trip as a great community event that supports students' cultural capital, is great fun, and introduces many of our students to the very British institution of the pantomime.

Anyone who hasn't paid will be contacted in the next week or so to make payment.



Parking

Thank you also for your patience with parking this week. I apologise for the temporary unavailability of the Garden Centre car park—Pinewood Studios were filming nearby, with Tom Hardy and crew on location! Filming has now concluded, and I will provide an update early next week if needed.

Field

Finally, I am pleased to report that our field is nearly ready for pitch marking. The warm, damp autumn has encouraged excellent grass growth, and our rabbit visitors seem to have moved on. While we will begin using the field for school sport, I have decided not to rent it out externally for the next couple of years to allow the grass to fully establish.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Warm regards,

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

Andy Hartley

Headteacher