



Headteacher's Update

14 November 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone is well and has managed to shelter from the awful weather today.

Attendance

We have had another good week at River Academy with attendance around **96%** across the week despite being deep into November. Thank you for your support in ensuring students keep coming in despite the odd sniffle and ache.

Numbers for 2026/2027

We received our parental preference allocations last week. Whilst I won't go into details, we are highly oversubscribed for next September with a substantial increase on this year. I would like to thank you because it is clear the reputation of the school is rapidly expanding, and a lot of this comes from your positive words on the touchline, at the primary school pick-up, or wherever you have swapped anecdotes. Positive parental choices can only help the school as students arriving will realise how lucky they are to have a place at such an oversubscribed institution, and this will further cement the ethos and culture we are shaping.

SEND Audit

On Tuesday we had an audit of our SEND provision by the Maiden Erlegh Trust. I want to thank the parents who came up to school to meet Kelly Nash, the Director of SEND, regarding this audit. There was also a student and staff panel, as well as learning walks and data analysis there was a very detailed investigation of our offer. I will share the main points of the report when I receive it next week, but the verbal feedback was most positive.

I have included one of a number of pieces of similar written feedback that parents who couldn't attend the in-person session sent through.

I honestly feel (child's name) has settled in incredibly well. I feel (child's name) as he needs the structure and routine and what is expected of him and from my understanding this carries on through all lessons and all teachers have the same expectations (as I know from when I was in school each teacher was very different in their approaches but River it feels very structured). I feel like the both times (child's name) had a detention it was explained to him and his voice was also heard, which at

primary school it was a “stop talking back” mentality of which he would get into a fluster and cry because he was seeking clarity, whereas at River he feels he is able to have discussions and gain clarity and it’s something he 100% needs to be able to understand any consequences and why things have happened with an open dialogue which River provides. I can see the growth in (child’s name) and considering he didn’t have any primary friends that were going I’m amazed at the inclusion and his progress. He has so many opportunities at River that he likely wouldn’t have had elsewhere.

I feel the way the school is very routined, focused with expectations laid out clearly from the offset and before he started has helped him adapt to the routine. (Child’s name) likes to know what’s going to happen, what’s expected of him etc and I was really worried about his transition between classes. But because each teacher has the same expectation and same standard this has really helped him to settle in well and as a parent I am so grateful for that.

Barclays Life Skills workshop



On Tuesday all of Year 8 attended a workshop as part of their careers programme. It was very much an introduction to thinking about jobs and careers and how the world of work offers a huge variety of experiences. The students were in groups of 37 so we could get all of the students into the day. Despite the large groups we got the following feedback from the lead facilitator.

I wanted to say a gigantic thank you for all of the pre-organisation you set up in advance. This isn’t necessarily the norm (!) and having registers printed and ready at the front of the room, the printing all ready and the names of those members of staff who would be in the sessions is invaluable as a facilitator visiting to run the sessions; so please keep being as brilliantly organised. It was a treat!

The students’ and their work ethic was nothing short of remarkable - I fed this back to every member of staff we met yesterday because your students are extremely impressive! They were so generous with their answers, contributing throughout and always being willing to give it a shot - they asked relevant questions to Robert (our guest from Barclays) which showed their engagement and they were a genuine joy to both meet as young people - and run the session for!

Students knew where they needed to be and were on time for every session, they were professional and polite, and staff knew what the event was and where it was running. Everyone we met was so warm and welcoming and you could see the care and passion everyone shares to make River Academy truly excellent!

The room was perfect for the session - it was super to have the dividing partition undone so the room never felt cramped. The tech was a doddle to set up, and the staff members who were present in the sessions were (obviously) great at what they do, helping to make sure seats were filled from the front and giving gentle reminders after some of the livelier activities that made up the workshop, that it was time to focus again. There were no behaviour issues whatsoever.

Everything was just so well organised - I really can’t stress this enough (though maybe I’ve hammered the point home in this email!) and that showed right throughout the day.

As we left, Robert said he would love to come back and work with your students again - and he said he'd also share his experience with his colleagues in the evening (they had a team meal) and encourage others to also attend the next session too - so hopefully if everything aligns there'll be even more industry volunteers at future sessions.

So, to yourself, your staff and all of your Year 8 students - thank you for a great first session of the set!

Many thanks,

Richard

Open Morning

On Thursday morning, **50 parents from Year 7** came in for an Open Morning. They arrived for 9am and observed our line-up before a short presentation and then spent the next 45 minutes observing lessons before a final Q&A session. I held the meeting because I want to be transparent about the school we are and the offer we give to our students, and I was so pleased that the parents saw our school as the slick, calm and focused operation that we see each and every day.

Parent Forum

We will be holding our **Year 7 Parents Forum** on **Tuesday 18th from 6pm to 7pm**, and I look forward to meeting you and discussing the school at this occasion.

[Please click here to sign up](#)

Electives

Our Electives programme will run for three more weeks before Christmas with the last session on **December 3rd**. For the next three Wednesdays, a senior member of staff will position themselves under the Cow Lane bridges to support the students getting home safely. The Elective programme will resume in the first week back after the Christmas break.

Children In Need 2026

Do watch the broadcast evening as one of our students, Idrees, is part of the show. As recognition of his contribution to Children in Need we will be holding a non-uniform day for the charity Daisy's Dream in the near future and will communicate next week with a finalised date.

Homework

Thank you for your continued support for homework. Our Sparx results remain high with **99% completion** being achieved for Maths and Science along with **100% for Reader**. This is a team effort, but one that will only reap rewards in the end.



98.9+% Completion Rates

Sparx Reader:	100%	1st out of 966 schools
Sparx Maths:	98.9%	4th out of 2546 schools
Sparx Science:	99.5%	

Year 8 Report

Year 8 students will receive their first report (**DCP – data collection point**) of the year next week, and it will be useful to see the data and compare it to last summer along with our behaviour data.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Ms Moore and Mr Rosser, our Heads of Year, this week to discuss the interventions that they are making for those students who need a little extra support and it is great to see how on top of the data they both are.

Sport

Our clubs offer for sport for such a small school grows and is excellent, and I am grateful to Mr Clare for offering a new football session before school each Friday morning from **8am to 8.45am**. This complements our football, netball, badminton and basketball clubs that run each week.

The basketball league fixtures begin in a couple of weeks, and it will be interesting to see how we fare as there are definitely some very strong individuals within the school talent pool.

Ski Trip

Mr Woodfine and I attended the Maiden Erlegh Trust ski trip meeting on Wednesday evening. Our **20 students** will make up a part of over **200 (students and staff)** heading out to Italy in Easter 2026. The trip is one of the many benefits of being a part of the Trust, and I am incredibly grateful to Alison Walker and her team for getting River Academy on the list. The students are currently planning our fancy dress outfits for the final day's skiing with some talk of everyone dressing as the **Super Mario brothers!**



The trip for **2027** will be launched very soon and will be open to current Year 7 and 8 students.

Have a great weekend.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Andy Hartley

Headteacher