



## Headteacher's Update

21 November 2025

### Dear Parents and Carers,

The weather has certainly been interesting this week, and Wednesday morning's snow brought plenty of excitement for our students!

### Teaching and Learning Spotlight Week

This week, we have been completing an internal audit of our teaching and learning. Every member of staff has been observed delivering lessons and has received feedback on their practice. It has been a busy week, but incredibly worthwhile.

Since September, staff have carried out more than 350 drop-ins on each other, providing feedback, shout-outs, and coaching to ensure teaching remains at a very high standard. I am delighted by the exceptional professionalism and openness of our staff and equally impressed by the outstanding conduct of our students.

### Year 7 Parent Forum

On Tuesday evening, we held a Year 7 Parent Forum. It was wonderful to hear how much our work is valued by parents and to receive constructive ideas for further improvement.

### Ideas from parents included:

- **Access to curriculum booklets and slides at home:** We have been working on this and aim to have everything ready by early December.
- **Making time in On Patrol more constructive:** We are developing a shadow set of work for students to complete so they stay up to date with the curriculum.
- **Clarifying rules on makeup:** We will provide clearer guidance, but in essence, only a very light touch is permitted so that it is not overly visible.

### School Council

We also recently met with students following their Year Council meetings to hear their ideas for improvement. Suggestions included:

- **More trips:** The PGL Year 7 letter will be out shortly, and additional trips are planned for Year 8.
- **Pizza Fridays in the canteen:** Mr Hartley will discuss this with our cook, Mrs Jones.
- **Changing the lunch order for year groups:** We will rotate after Christmas and again at Easter.
- **More clubs (Art, Science, Drama, etc.):** Mr Hartley will speak to staff about expanding opportunities.
- **Better music for Celebration Assembly:** A playlist has been created using student song choices!
- **Widening oracy opportunities at lunchtime:** Mr Hartley will work with Heads of Year to develop a system for greater participation.



## LAMDA

I have been delighted that we have been able to start offering LAMDA classes at school in the last two weeks. The opportunity for students to work on their dramatic skills and the power of their voice is so important, and I am grateful to Ms Raphaely our LAMDA teacher for facilitating this.



## Hooked on Vaping

Year 8 attended a performance of *Hooked on Vaping*, a play highlighting the dangers and uncertainties of vaping, including the ingredients in vape liquids. The performance was high-energy and aimed at early adolescents, and feedback from students suggests the message was well received.

A representative from Reading Borough Council, who sponsored the project, attended the event. They are working hard to prevent shops in the area from knowingly selling vapes to under-18s. Sadly, much of their work is concentrated in the two square miles around River Academy, so please remain vigilant as parents.

## Kindness

We have focused on kindness and respect with Year 8 this week following some poor choices. The message was clear: it is unacceptable to be unkind or provoke others to see if they react. This behaviour constitutes bullying, and we cannot allow it at school or beyond the school gates.

## Non-Uniform Day



We are looking forward to our Non-Uniform Day next Friday, raising money for Daisy's Dream, a charity supporting young people who have suffered bereavement. This is a charity that works with several students in school and therefore, it felt apt to

nominate it for our first non-uniform day of the year. A letter was sent home earlier in the week but please see the attached letter again. Please pay attention to the clothing guidelines—students must remember they are coming to school, and the day needs to be successful if we are to continue offering such opportunities.

**Thank you for your continued support. Have a great weekend!**

**Have a great weekend.**

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. Hartley'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

**Andy Hartley**

Headteacher