



Headteacher's Update

19 December 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Well, we have made it—and what a term it has been!

- **15 weeks of school**
- **Just under 400 lessons**
- **Attendance at 95.7%**, with SEND and Pupil Premium attendance several percentage points above the national average
- **250,000 merits** and just over **6,000 demerits** (that is **41 merits for every demerit!**)
- **475,000 Sparx Maths questions answered** (around 2,500 per student)
- **4,300 hours of Sparx Reader completed** (an average of 23 hours and 15 minutes per student)
- **511,900 Sparx Science questions answered** (around 2,750 per student)
- Exceptionally high homework completion rates across all subjects and strong national rankings

	Sparx Maths		Sparx Reader		Sparx Science
12/12/25	98.9%	3 rd	99.5%	1 st	99.5%
05/12/25	98.9%	4 th	99.2%	1 st	99.7%
28/11/25	100%	1 st	100%	1 st	99.7%
21/11/25	100%	1 st	99.5%	2 nd	99.7%
14/11/25	98.9%	4 th	100%	1 st	99.5%

Other highlights include:

- Opening our new library
- A fantastic visit from the Schools Minister and Regional Schools Commissioner
- Publishing all student resources online for revision and support
- Only two student suspensions all term
- A very long waiting list for September 2026
- High staff satisfaction, low staff absence, and no resignations

- Very few parental complaints (thank you!)
- Excellent feedback from visitors
- Substantial numbers of students attending sports practices before and after school
- Our choir gaining momentum
- A wonderful Christmas concert and Celebration Evening to round off the term

Ministerial Visit

Last Thursday, River Academy hosted the Department for Education for a regional conference on the future of SEND provision. This evolved into something bigger, with Georgia Gould, Government Minister for Schools, and Dame Kate Dethridge, Regional Director for Schools (Southeast), both requesting tours of the school.

Both visits went incredibly well. Our guests saw motivated, engaged, and well-mannered students working hard and striving for excellence—you would have been immensely proud! Below are a few photos from the day.





And here is an extract from Dame Kate's thank you letter.

"I wanted to extend my sincere thanks to Maiden Erlegh Trust for hosting the SE SEND regional engagement event at River Academy on 11 December and for taking the time to show me around the school. I greatly appreciated our conversation during the tour and was impressed by the positive atmosphere throughout the academy.

It was remarkable to see how much the school has achieved in such a short time and to hear about its popularity within the local community. I thoroughly enjoyed observing some lessons and speaking with several students. From an observational point, the determination of your pupils to succeed and the enthusiasm they brought to their learning were inspiring. They are a real credit to the school and to the team supporting them".

Christmas Celebration Evening

On Tuesday, we held our Christmas Celebration Awards Night. Thank you to all the parents and students who attended—over 200 people joined us for speeches, certificate presentations, and performances from the choir, Sofia Silva's stunning pointe dance, and Marios and Jacinth's amazing instrumentals. It was a true community event, with staff speaking so warmly about our students and their achievements.

Christmas Dinner and Christmas jumper day

We rounded off the term with our Christmas dinner on Wednesday—a fantastic event with turkey, hats, quizzes, and singing. Staff were on hand to serve and tidy, ensuring students enjoyed a smooth and festive dining experience.



Interhouse Tournaments

In the true spirit of River community, we have also had both year groups all participating in interhouse netball and benchball this week. As you can see from the photos these are mass participation events that bring out the absolute best in our students with their encouragement and participation levels all fully locked in. A huge thank you to Mr Clare and Ms Moore who ran these events.



AI and Sparx A quick reminder: please keep an eye on your child's use of AI tools for Sparx homework. While it may seem helpful, Sparx adjusts difficulty based on correct answers, which can lead to students struggling later when they are set work that is simply too hard for them.

The Silver Programme

We are rightly proud of our Silver Programme, and the image below shows you what is coming up.

These after-school sessions run throughout the term and offer stretch and challenge opportunities beyond the curriculum. They are advertised in weekly bulletins and on Class Charts, and sign-up is

required (this is usually on the door of the teacher running the session). Please encourage your child to take part.

Taking place this term:

Make sure you are signing up to these amazing FREE opportunities!



Description		Y7/Y8?	Date	Time
Italian for Beginners		Y7 ONLY	8/1/26	3.45-4.30pm
Linguistics Olympiad		Y7 & Y8	13/1/26	3.45-4.30pm
Community Lecture: Victorian Reading		EVERYONE- including parents, carers, staff, students, members of our community.	20/1/26	4-5pm
Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration		Y7 & Y8	27/1/26	3.40-4.45pm
Classics for All Day (invite only)		Y8 ONLY (invite only)	29/1/26	All Day
How Does Mythology Impact Our Modern World?		Y7 & Y8	3/2/26	3.45-4.30pm
Community Lecture: Planetary Defence		EVERYONE- including parents, carers, staff, students, members of our community.	10/2/26	4-5pm
Villains- why do we love them so much?		Y7 ONLY	2/3/26	3.45-4.30pm
Maths Challenge Preparation		Y7 ONLY	10/3/26	3.45-4.30pm
Science Masterclass: Heart dissections		Y8 ONLY	19/3/26	3.45-4.30pm
What did the Romans do for fun?		Y7 ONLY	DATE TBC	3.45-4.30pm

Speak to Miss Angell if you have any questions.

More details about each session will be shared in the bulletin.

Looking Ahead

On the first day back, we will spend some time reminding students of expectations and sharing a few small refinements for 2026.

School restarts at **9:10am on Monday, 5th January**. Please ensure your child arrives on time, ready to learn, with full equipment and correct uniform and footwear. A uniform checklist is attached.

[River Academy School Uniform](#)

[River Academy - TOOLS FOR LEARNING](#)

Parents of Year 8 girls: please check skirt length and purchase one that is the required length, if necessary. As reminder, our wording says that skirts should sit just above the knee i.e. 3 inches at most. Thank you for your support.

For families celebrating Christmas, I wish you a very Merry Christmas. For those not celebrating Christmas, I hope you enjoy a restful and relaxing break.

Best wishes,

A. Hartley

Andy Hartley

Headteacher