



**RIVER ACADEMY**  
**Issue 17**

**Headteacher's Update**

30 January 2026

**Dear Parents and Carers,**

I hope everyone is well and managing to endure the weather. February – and therefore spring – is on the horizon, which I know we will all be grateful for. Please accept my apologies for the lack of a newsletter last week: I was busy with interviews and didn't have a minute to spare!

**Attendance**

We have had a great start to the term, with **four consecutive weeks of 96%+ attendance**. Given that we currently have a couple of long-term absentees, this is even more impressive, and I cannot thank you enough for your continued support.

It is particularly heartening to see that **Year 8** have significantly improved their attendance this term, currently sitting at **96.5%**. As ever, students need to be in school to be learning, and despite the usual round of January sniffles, so many of our students have shown real **determination and resilience** in continuing to attend.

**Sparx**

**RIVER ACADEMY**

Sparx Reader  
Sparx Maths  
Sparx Science

**The River Difference**

Sparx Reader: 99.7% 2nd out of 1047 schools  
Sparx Maths: 99.7% 1st out of 2601 schools  
Sparx Science: 99.2%

We have made an outstanding start to the term. For the last four weeks, we have been the number one school in the country for both Sparx Maths and Sparx Reader.

Given that there are over 2,700 schools using Sparx Maths and more than 1,000 using Sparx Reader, achieving quadruple double gold is a remarkable accomplishment.

We have also seen a noticeable reduction in

numbers attending Friday Catch-Up Club, which is really pleasing. It shows that habits of determination, self-management and autonomy are becoming firmly embedded.

### **Holocaust Memorial Assemblies**

Miss Angell delivered two fantastic assemblies on the Holocaust. The **Year 7 assembly** was particularly poignant, focusing on the role of Maidenhead resident **Nicholas Winton**, who organised the evacuation of over **660 refugees** from Prague to London in 1938 and 1939. There are over **6,000 people alive today** because of Mr Winton's bravery, and his story is certainly one worth telling.

Miss Angell followed this with a **live broadcast** on the Holocaust, attended by more than **30 students**.

### **Mastery Showcase Week**

Good luck to all of our **Year 7s** in their Mastery Showcase Week next week. I hope they are able to apply themselves over the weekend to their revision.

**Year 8** receive their results on Wednesday. From what I hear, there will be many students celebrating their success and reflecting on the hard work they have put into their preparation.

### **Sport**

Hats off to our **Year 8 basketballers**, who – despite competing in the **Year 9 league** – secured **back-to-back victories** last week against Denefield and Blessed Hugh Faringdon School.

Our **Year 7** team were narrowly defeated by Bohunt on Thursday and played really well despite two late withdrawals (a broken wrist and a stomach upset).

Our **Year 8 boys football team** were in action on Tuesday in the Reading **5-a-side tournament**. After winning their group, they were knocked out – for the second time this season – by Bohunt, which was really frustrating.



Thank you to **Mr Clare** for all his hard work in organising these fixtures and giving his time so generously. Our **girls' netball fixtures** begin in the coming weeks.

## **Barclays LifeSkills**

We were delighted to welcome **Barclays** back into school last week, delivering a series of **LifeSkills workshops** to our **Year 8 students**. The sessions focused on working habits, attitudes, and what it takes to be successful.

Below is feedback from **Richard**, the lead facilitator. If you are a Year 8 parent, you should be extremely proud:

*“Just wanted to drop you a quick note to say another huge thank you for having us today at River Academy.*

*Without exaggeration, the Year 8s absolutely excelled themselves (again!) – sharing some incredible answers, working diligently and being actively engaged throughout. It is a genuine pleasure to work with them!”*

## **Recruitment**

We are currently in the midst of our recruitment window as we prepare to expand into **Year 9**. Last week we appointed a new **Head of Year** and an **Assistant Headteacher**.

A link to our vacancies can be found on our job pages and MyNewTerm:

[Maiden Erlegh Trust - VACANCIES \(MY NEW TERM\)](#)

Please do share this with any contacts who you feel may be suitable for our available roles.

## **Mathletes**

Congratulations to **Charlie Souch** and **Nabil Maalik**, who were crowned our **Mathletes champions** last week after winning their respective year-group finals.

The final questions were read aloud (the students could not see them) and they had just **five seconds** to answer correctly. I quickly ran out of fingers trying to work them out myself! It speaks volumes about our students that they demonstrated such **accuracy and rapidity** while performing under pressure in front of their peers in the assembly hall.

## **River Canon Letter**

Thank you to **Ms Myers** for sending out the letter last week regarding the **River Canon**.

As outlined in the letter, we are asking all students to ensure that their **reading-for-pleasure book** is appropriate for their age and reading ability. Students have until **Monday 9 February** to change their books if necessary. As you know, we have a well-stocked **school library**, so no additional cost is required.

## Extra-Curricular Offer

Thank you to so many parents for supporting your sons and daughters in attending our wide range of clubs outside the school day.

Last Tuesday alone featured:

- A Victorian Reading lecture
- Netball trials
- A basketball fixture
- Axiom Maths
- Homework Club

On that single day, well over **100 students** (around **30% of the school**) were involved.

Yesterday also saw 15 Year 8's visit the **University of Reading** for a '**Classics For All**' workshop. You can see by their smiling faces just how much they enjoyed the day! Thanks to **Miss Angell** for all her hard work and great networking to make these opportunities possible



On Fridays, many of our **Year 7 students** arrive before **8:00am** for **Breakfast Football Club**, and stay on after school for **Reading Rockets**. My favourite way to round off the week, however, is with a visit to **STEM Club** – last week featuring **cow eye dissections!**



Thank you all for your continued support of our whole-school offer and systems.

**Best wishes,**

*A. Hartley*

**Andy Hartley**

Headteacher