

4 February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you regarding concerns about knife crime within the local community. Since the tragic murder of Oly Stephens in 2021, this issue has been an increased focus for headteachers across the area. Oly was very young when he lost his life, and his death serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of education and prevention.

Although River Academy currently educates students in Years 7 and 8 only, it is vital that we are never complacent. From the students' perspective, developing an early awareness of the risks and consequences associated with knife crime is incredibly important.

With this in mind, I have been working closely with our local schools' police liaison officer, PC Carly Baldwin, to arrange a number of age-appropriate initiatives to support students' understanding of this issue. As part of this work, Thames Valley Police will be attending the school to conduct a knife arch entry, in line with other local secondary schools. Students will walk through the arch as they arrive at school on a date within the coming weeks. We will work closely with the police to ensure that this is delivered sensitively and appropriately.

Our intention is not to alarm students, but to help them understand the serious implications of carrying a knife—for themselves, their friends, and the wider community. As a school, we have a responsibility to educate and safeguard our students so that we can help prevent further tragedy.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Andy Hartley  
Headteacher

