



Headteacher's Update

13 March 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone is well and has had a good week.

As ever, we have had a busy time at River...

Assemblies-

On Thursday, we welcomed 17 students from Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge. These students were a mix of Years 10 and 11 and visited us to tell our community about an expedition to Kenya that they are undertaking. The trip will involve significant time working in a rural school, both teaching the students and helping to develop the school's facilities. Their inspirational talk also covered how they fundraised the £2,500 needed for each student. I have attached a QR code below, and the slides are also included in this mailshot should you wish to find out more or donate to their worthy cause.



Students also enjoyed an excellent assembly from Mr Fasham on careers and why a linear career journey is now very unusual. Staff across the school have been sharing their early career aspirations, and it has been fascinating to see what everyone did before teaching and what they might like to do if they were not teachers.

Reading Brough Council visit

On Tuesday morning, we were visited by Alice Boon, a senior member of Reading Borough Council's schools team. I will share fuller feedback when I receive it, but Alice, a specialist in SEN, was very impressed with our bookletised curriculum as a way of promoting inclusion. She also felt our systemic completion of homework, ensuring everyone keeps up, is an excellent approach. Lastly, I asked for her view on our dining experience, and I was really pleased with her feedback: she felt that having set seating with regular adjustments greatly reduces the social anxiety around choosing where and with whom to sit with each lunchtime.

Sport

In Sport, our Year 8 netballers defeated The Wren School 6–0 and Denefield 7–3 to move back into the top two in their group, hopefully putting them back on course for finals day in a few weeks. Our Year 7 were less successful and suffered defeats to Kendrick and Denefield this week.



Our Year 7 footballers also gained their first victory of the season with a 3–0 win over The Wren. Despite a 2–0 defeat to The Willink, they showed great improvements across the whole squad. Our Year 8 footballers defeated The Wren 1-0 and maintained their positive start to the season.

The Brilliant Club

On Tuesday, 16 of our students had their introductory session for The Brilliant Club. The Brilliant Club is a charitable organisation that uses current PhD students to teach and mentor school-age pupils through a research project. As a school, we have little say in the topic which can be frustrating and, in the past, students have looked topics such as cell structure or the Marxist interpretation of the French Revolution. This time, the topic is an interesting piece of sociology: *“The secret to living a long and happy life.”* As well as the teaching, students will be expected to write a 1,500-word essay, which will be graded, and then attend a graduation ceremony at the end of the summer term.



Cow Lane bridges

I am grateful to Councillor Wendy Griffiths (Battle ward) who met me after dark on the Cow Lane bridges underpass on Wednesday. I wanted to share with her my frustration and anxiety regarding the inadequate lighting on the underpass. She was in complete agreement and was confident that she would be able to do something about it. Fingers crossed!

Moral Dilemma

As part of our lunchtime activities, we shared the following dilemma with our students. The results were 90% positive with most students recognising that they would return the phone because it was the right thing to do, empathising with their own feelings about losing a phone. However, there were a few students who felt keeping the phone for their own profit was the right thing. It might be worth discussing this at home to see what results you get?

Moral Dilemma: “The Lost Phone”

On the way home from school, you find a brand-new smartphone on a bench at the local park. It has a passcode, but when you press the power button, a message appears on the lock screen:

“If found, please call Mum – 07...”

Before you can decide what to do, your friend Sam says:

“You should keep it! It’s worth loads, and they probably have insurance anyway. Besides, you found it — finders keepers.”

You’re not sure. You know the right thing might be to return it, but Sam is one of your closest friends, and you don’t want to upset them. Sam also reminds you that your own phone is old and cracked, and your parents can’t afford a new one right now.

What should you do?

Eid

For all our River families observing Eid, please remember you are entitled to one day of authorised absence. I understand from some of our parents that there is ongoing discussion around the timing of Eid depending on whether the moon sighting is followed from Saudi Arabia or from the UK. Therefore, I am happy to authorise either Thursday or Friday in line with your chosen lunar sighting, but not both days.



Last day of term

Please also note that the last day of term is **27 March**, and we will finish at **3.15pm** on that day. It is not a half day.

Have a fantastic weekend!

Best wishes,

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

Andy Hartley

Headteacher