



**RIVER ACADEMY**  
**Issue 22**

**Headteacher's Update**

**20 March 2026**

**Dear Parents and Carers,**

I hope you have all been able to enjoy some welcome spring sunshine this week.

**Eid Mubarak**

To all our River families who celebrated Eid, we hope you enjoyed a peaceful, joyful, and spiritually fulfilling time together.

**Red Nose Day**

Thank you to everyone who supported our fundraising efforts for Red Nose Day. As you will have seen from the photographs, our students embraced the occasion brilliantly and looked fantastic. We are grateful for your generosity and enthusiasm.



## Local Authority Visit Report

Last week we were delighted to welcome Alice Boon, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness at Reading Borough Council, for our annual Local Authority inspection. It is always reassuring to receive an external perspective that validates the work we do every day, and we were very pleased with the findings.

Below are some of the comments we are especially proud to share:

*The school's curriculum and structured workbooks are designed to reduce barriers to learning and secure foundational skills. Leaders understand the importance of managing cognitive load by breaking content into small steps and using simple approaches to instruction and modelling. This ensures that children, particularly those with differences in attention, processing, and memory, can focus on learning and feel clever in class. This approach also supports staff planning and reduces workload.*

*Staff presence during morning arrivals was emphasised as a key strategy to help students feel a sense of belonging and predictability. Consistent routines, such as seating plans at lunchtime and structured line-ups, were identified as beneficial for fostering a calm and organised environment. Participants agreed that these measures help students feel secure and supported, which is particularly important for those who may struggle with transitions or unpredictability*

*The school's structured lunchtimes are particularly impactful for neurodivergent students. By carefully seating children and scaffolding discussions, the school eliminates the social stress of finding someone to sit with or worrying about being alone. This approach fosters feelings of safety, security, and belonging while still allowing children the freedom to express themselves during the second part of lunch.*

*The school's approach to behaviour is highly therapeutic, focusing on helping children grow in self-discipline through learning and enacting high expectations. Teachers do not raise their voices, and detentions are used as opportunities for students to catch up on missed work. This approach ensures that children; feel clever and safe, receive educational consequences that drive growth and have lived experiences that celebrate individual strengths and create belonging for all.*

*We discussed the approach to maintaining consistency in behaviour expectations and classroom routines. It was noted that this approach reduces the need for repeated behavioural interventions, allowing teachers to focus on teaching. The school's low staff absence rate was attributed to the positive working environment and the structured systems in place, which minimise disruptions. Emphasis on high expectations and "warm strictness" aligns closely with the Local Authorities expectation of therapeutic and relational practice approaches to behaviour.*

## Sports Fixtures

It has been an action-packed week in Sport:

- Year 8 Boys Football – A win against Blessed Hugh Faringdon and a loss against Little Heath.
- Year 7 Boys Football – In a curious coincidence, the Year 7 team mirrored the Year 8 results exactly!
- Netball – Year 8 girls secured a draw in one match and a loss in the other; Year 7 also finished with a draw.



My sincere thanks to Ms Moore and Mr Clare for their commitment and energy. The spring term is always the busiest for fixtures, and their hard work ensures our students continue to flourish.

## Silver Programme

We were delighted to welcome a full cohort of students to our heart dissection session this week. Students approached the activity with impressive curiosity, exploring the structures and pathways within the heart. While a few were looking slightly pale by the end, everyone engaged brilliantly and learned a great deal!



## Events Next Week

A reminder of the upcoming events in school:

- School Musical – Monday, 5.30pm doors open
- GCSE & A-Level Curriculum Parent Engagement Evening – Tuesday, 6.00pm ([click here to register your attendance](#))
- RSE Curriculum Online Consultation, hosted by Mrs Billingham – Thursday

We look forward to seeing many of you during the week.

## Final Thoughts

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. I hope you all have a restful and enjoyable weekend.

**Best wishes,**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the "Best wishes," text.

**Andy Hartley**

Headteacher