



Headteacher's Update

17 April 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everyone had a restful break over the Easter period and was able to enjoy the warm weather during the second week of the holiday.

Ski Trip

I had a fantastic first week of the holiday with 20 of our River Academy Year 8 students, who formed part of a wider group travelling on the Maiden Erlegh Trust ski trip. In total, five coaches, 26 staff and 200 students from the Trust's four secondary schools spent six sun-kissed days skiing in San Sicario in the Italian Alps.

Skiing is a pastime that requires real determination and resilience as students push through the initial challenges of learning to ski and turn. There is also a huge amount of self-organisation involved — skis, boots, gloves, helmets and more — but the rewards for this effort are truly worth it.

It was an absolute pleasure to spend time with our students and to see them work so hard and dig deep to progress on the slopes. Many went from never having skied before to confidently (if not always elegantly!) gliding down blue slopes and, in some cases, even tackling steep red runs by the end of the week.

I'm pleased to report that no students suffered any serious injuries, and Mr Woodfine and I also returned safe and sound.

I have spoken to students about next year's trip, and a reminder letter has been shared. A PDF of the assembly I delivered during the trip is also attached to this



newsletter. Please do consider signing your child up if they are interested — it is a truly fantastic opportunity and is open to all students in **Years 8 and 9**.

Return to School

We have had a fantastic first week back, with students returning refreshed, positive and ready to learn.

As usual, we spent some extra time on Monday morning with our termly “re-set”, ensuring all students were fully prepared for lessons later in the day. The week has been incredibly calm, with only a very small number of issues. A key part of our re-set is reminding students just how amazing they are and recognising what they have achieved so far this year. I have shared a small selection of images from our Monday assembly alongside this newsletter.



Barclays feedback

- Year 8 were, once again, phenomenal! They never fail to amaze me with their professionalism, their candour and their impressive can-do/will-do attitude!
- It was another brilliant day, and I very much look forward to the next one.



Visitor feedback- Maiden Erlegh School Leaders

- I am completely inspired! How lovely to see such proud students, working so hard. Your students very clearly get an amazing deal from all of your hard work.
- Thank you so much for having us 😊
- Thank you so much for your time this morning. Jo and I came back buzzing with ideas, and ready to revamp some of our approaches to Teaching and Learning.
- You and the team are doing an amazing job, and River feels like such a positive place to study or work.



	Sparx Maths		Sparx Reader		Sparx Science
27/03/26	100%	1 st	100%	1 st	99.2%
20/03/26	96.4% (98.9%)	6 th	97.5% (99.5%)	8 th	97.5% (99.2%)
13/03/26	100%	1 st	99.2%	2 nd	99.7%
06/03/26	99.7%	1 st	99.7%	1 st	100%
27/02/26	99.4%	1 st	99.5%	1 st	99.7%

13/02/26	100%	1 st	99.4%	2 nd	99.5%
06/02/26	100%	1 st	100%	1 st	99.0%
30/01/26	100%	1 st	99.7%	1 st	99.5%
23/01/26	99.7%	1 st	99.7%	2 nd	99.2%
16/01/26	100%	1 st	100%	1 st	100%
09/01/26	100%	1 st	100%	1 st	99.5%

Mastery Showcase Assessment Week

This week, students were also introduced to their upcoming **Mastery Showcase Assessment Week**. Dr Dukinfield and Mrs Billingham led an assembly outlining:

- When the assessments are taking place
- Which subjects are being assessed
- How students should revise
- Where to find revision materials and guidance

All students have access to key links via **Class Charts**, and parents have already been emailed the full revision document. The assessment timetable will be shared shortly.

Please do encourage your child to begin revising in good time for **Mastery Showcase Week: 11–15 May**.

Bridge Provision – Reading Borough Council Review

On the final day of last term, we were visited by Reading Borough Council for the annual review of our **Bridge Provision**. The Bridge is our Additional Resource Provision, supporting seven students in each year group who require extra assistance. Students attend a combination of mainstream and specialist lessons.

For many of these pupils, primary school has not always been a positive experience, so the Bridge team work tirelessly to ensure students feel safe, supported and successful. The feedback below

was therefore particularly pleasing, and my sincere thanks go to Helena Basham and the entire Bridge team.

Summary: Effectiveness of the Provision

Overall, the feedback provides convincing evidence that the provision is highly effective in meeting both the academic and pastoral needs of pupils with additional needs.

The specialist environment supports a successful transition to secondary education, significantly reducing anxiety and increasing engagement with learning. Pupils make clear and measurable progress, particularly in core literacy and numeracy skills, while also developing confidence, independence, and positive attitudes to school.

Staff expertise in SEN, combined with a nurturing, small-group approach, enables pupils to access the curriculum at an appropriate level and gradually integrate into mainstream lessons with confidence. Strong relationships between staff, pupils, and families underpin the success of the provision.

Importantly, the provision has a positive impact on wellbeing, attendance, and motivation, with pupils feeling safe, listened to, and valued. Minor areas for development relate to enhancing communication with families, particularly around progress updates, rather than the quality of provision itself.

In summary, the provision represents a highly effective model of inclusive practice and has a positive impact on pupils' academic progress, confidence, and emotional wellbeing.



Mary Earps – Inspiring Learning Beyond the Classroom

Over the Easter break, I came across a short clip from former England goalkeeper **Mary Earps** on LinkedIn, which I found incredibly uplifting. Mary, who now plays for Paris Saint-Germain, completed a television interview entirely in French after living in France for just 18 months.

The determination required to learn a new language while playing professional sport at the highest level is truly inspiring. I will be sharing this clip with students, as it sends a

powerful message about the importance — and achievability — of learning languages, whatever their future career path. [Please click here to watch the interview.](#)

Scholars Programme & Axiom Maths Trip

This week also saw two groups of students embrace exciting academic challenges.

A group of Year 7 mathematicians visited the **University of Reading** as part of the Axiom Maths Club. They enjoyed a campus tour and tackled a range of challenging problems — with feedback that the day would have been even better if there had been “*more maths!*” A very River Academy response!

Meanwhile, another group of students began their journey with **The Brilliant Club**, embarking on a 10-week university-style programme led by a current PhD researcher. This will culminate in a 2,000-word dissertation, with students exploring the sociology/psychology themes such as “*The secret to a long and happy life*”. I very much look forward to reading their work.



Electives Programme

Our **Electives Programme** launched this week and, despite the less-than-perfect weather, has been a huge success. Students have loved trying new activities, including:

- Clay Club
- Chat and Colour
- Art Club
- Rowing
- Cricket,
- Softball
- Rounders
- Chess
- Coding
- Mock Trial
- Gardening
- Readipop
- Coaching
- MIT online learning opportunities



The programme exists to ensure all students can try something new, meet different peers, build relationships with staff outside the classroom, and enjoy school in a different way — and it has been wonderful to see it progressing so positively. I am also delighted to see that the government is now recommending similar enrichment programmes nationwide.

Silver Programme

Just a final note to draw your attention to our Silver Programme that re-starts on Tuesday and our visiting author talk is the first of a plethora of activities cross the term for our students.

Taking place this term:

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



Description	y7/y8?	Date	Time
Visiting Author	Y7 & Y8	21/4/26	3.45-4.30pm
Beneath the Magic: The Dark World of Fairytales	Y7 & Y8	23/4/26	3.45-4.30pm
History of Board Games	Y7	30/4/26	3.45-4.30pm
Portuguese Poetry	Y7 & Y8	5/5/26	3.45-4.30pm
Manjeet Mann & the British Library celebrate National Poetry Day	Y7 & Y8	8/6/26	3.45-4.30pm
World Ocean Day	Y7 & Y8	11/6/26	3.45-4.30pm
Why do we hate wasps?	Y7 & Y8	2/7/26	3.45-4.30pm
Narratives in Video Games	Y7 & Y8	14/7/26	3.45-4.30pm

Speak to Miss Angell if you have any questions.

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

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.
Have a wonderful weekend and take care.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a dark grey or black ink on a white background.

Andy Hartley

Headteacher