

Headteacher's Update

19 June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been another incredibly busy week in the life of River Academy, with so much to celebrate and enjoy. I have been delighted with students' attendance over the last two weeks and particularly this week, where our whole-school attendance rate reached approximately **97%**. This is absolutely fabulous for a state secondary school, especially in an area of relatively high deprivation, and it reflects the commitment of our students and families to education—thank you for your continued support.

Maths Challenge!

I am also thrilled to share some exceptional academic success. One of our Year 7 students, Nikita, has achieved a **Gold Award in the Junior Maths Kangaroo Challenge**. This is an outstanding accomplishment, as the competition is reserved for the **top 5% of high-performing students** from the Junior Maths Challenge cohort who are already the brightest mathematicians in the school. To perform so strongly at this level is truly remarkable and bodes incredibly well for his future success—very well done to Nikita.



Athletics

Our students have also excelled in athletics over the last two weeks.

The boys delivered a resounding victory in their match yesterday with individual successes for Maks and Theodore along with second places for Ezra and Aryan G. The boys have now come first and second in their first two fixtures which is brilliant work!!

The girls have matched this success

this week, with superb individual performances: Shakira secured victory in the shot put, and Inas impressed with victory in the long jump—particularly notable as it was her first ever attempt—and

Malika achieved **third place in the 75m race**, competing against students a year older. Alongside these achievements, it has been especially pleasing to receive compliments from Mr Clare and other staff about the **politeness, conduct, and sportsmanship** of our students.

River Manners

This exemplary behaviour was also recognised beyond sport. During last week's HPV vaccinations, the visiting immunisation team took the time to write to me to praise both the smooth organisation of the event and, most importantly, the conduct of our students. They noted how polite and considerate our young people were, even asking staff how their day was going. This is a wonderful reflection of our **River values and manners**, and I could not be **prouder**.

“Dear Mr Hartley

I just wanted to follow up with an e-mail following on from the vaccination session that was held on Friday 12th June for the HPV vaccinations.

I would like to express my thanks to you and your team for organising a well-run immunisation session at River Academy on Friday 12th June. I am aware that, other than a flu vaccination session, this was the first full vaccination session the school has held.

On the day everything was handled with great care and professionalism. Vanessa Cotterell and Sara Stevens were well prepared and very welcoming.

It was clear that Vanessa knew the young people well and it was evident that a lot of planning and coordination went into making the session efficient and as stress-free as possible. Both myself and my colleagues also commented on how well-mannered all pupils were too.

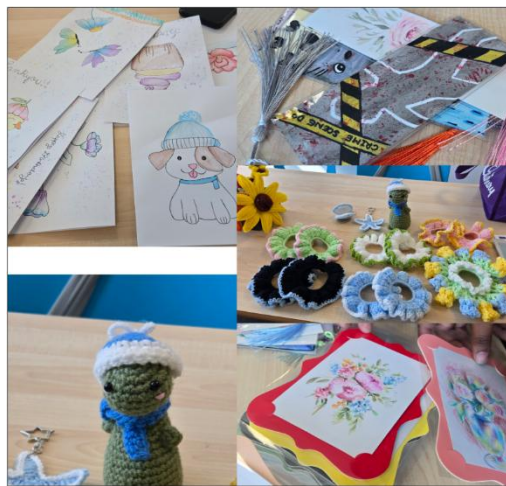
Please pass on my appreciation to everyone involved, their friendly approach and attention to detail made a real difference.

Thank you again for your efforts in supporting the health and wellbeing of the pupils.

With Kind regards,

The Immunisation Team”

Young Business Club



Our Young Business Club members go live with their work going on sale at the Young Business Showcase on July 4th.

[Reading Young Business Showcase - The #1 event for young entrepreneurs](#)

This event will see around 10 groups from River Academy selling their wares and turning their efforts and creativity into cash. We wish them all good luck.

Social media ban for under 16s

You may have seen the announcement this week regarding a **future social media ban for under-16s**, due to come into force in 2027. This development closely aligns with the work we have already done at River Academy, having been a **phone-free school since opening in September 2024**. Limiting access to platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat—both of which can negatively impact young people’s wellbeing through endless content and disappearing messages—is, in my view, a positive step. I also echo the broader conversation nationally: as restrictions are introduced, it is vital that we reinvest in opportunities for young people, such as youth clubs and enrichment activities, to provide meaningful alternatives.

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

Looking ahead, I am delighted to confirm that we will be launching the **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme** at River Academy. Mr Clare and Miss Cole will be leading this initiative, which will begin with our current Year 8 students during Year 9. This is a fantastic opportunity to further develop

students’ character, resilience, and independence—more details will follow in due course.

Trips

Our **Year 7 trips** last week were another highlight. The “Our Hometown” visits were extremely successful, with many positive



reports from staff and students alike. A particular highlight was the trip to Milford-on-Sea. While the weather was largely kind, there was unfortunately a spell of heavy rain just as students began their fieldwork—timing that was less than ideal! Nevertheless, students showed great resilience, continuing their work despite the downpour. Importantly, for many of our students this was their first experience of the English seaside, where they explored the unique coastal environment, enjoyed views of the Isle of Wight, and embraced a learning experience beyond the classroom. Their conduct throughout was exemplary.



Summer Show

Last night's **Summer Show** was a true celebration of talent. Around 70 students took to the stage or worked behind the scenes, delivering performances that were both confident and inspiring. From musicians and singers to dancers and artists, the evening showcased the depth of creativity at River Academy. I was immensely proud to watch our students perform with such commitment, confidence, and flair—long may this continue.



Transition

Next week we look forward to welcoming our new Year 7 cohort. We will host parents on Tuesday evening and students on Thursday for their first taste of life at River Academy. I am very much looking forward to meeting our new families as they begin their journey with us. These are exciting times—River Academy is now the **most oversubscribed non-selective secondary school in the Reading area**, with over 80 students on the waiting list. It is a privilege to welcome our new cohort, each holding what is truly a “golden ticket” to join our flourishing community.

Hot!

Finally, as we head into a very warm weekend and start to a hot week ahead, please ensure that

students come to school with a **water bottle** and are prepared for the heat. We will continue to provide iced water at lunchtime and support students in staying hydrated so they can continue to work effectively.

Have a wonderful and safe weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Andy Hartley,

Headteacher