

Headteacher's Update

10 July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you after another exceptionally busy and hugely successful two weeks at River Academy.

Following the various calendar alterations caused by our recent heatwave closure, staff and students have been working incredibly hard to ensure that we have been able to fit everything into an already packed schedule. Despite the challenges, it has been another fortnight that has showcased the very best of our school community, highlighting the ambition, resilience and positivity of our students and staff.

Maths and Reading tests



The students in Year 7 and 8 have been completing reading tests during this week to assess their progress over the year. In addition, Year 8 have done a Mathematics test to look at how much progress they have made since the beginning of Year 7.

There will be a separate communication on this next week, but I can already say that I am incredibly proud of the progress our students have made. Every group of students is making strong progress, with the vast majority achieving outcomes significantly above national norms.

When you now see the work the students are doing in Year 8 for Sparx, when you look at the depth of analysis that our students complete in English, you can see that our work, week in week out in all lessons and with homework is paying off rich rewards. I am a very proud and excited headteacher!

River Academy Crowned Reading Schools Athletics League Champions

Our sporting success last week was nothing short of extraordinary. I am absolutely delighted to announce that River Academy has won the **Reading Schools Athletics League**. This trophy has been contested for around 30 years and is traditionally dominated by some of the largest and most established schools



in the area, including schools such as Reading Blue Coat, The Piggott School and Maiden Erlegh. For River Academy to win this prestigious competition in our first year of entry is a truly remarkable achievement especially given many of the winning schools have 270 or 300 in a year group. My congratulations go to every student who represented the school across the fixtures over the past few weeks. While particular recognition must go to **Nabil and Ezra**, who both won their individual events at the final meeting, this success was very much a team effort. Consistent high placings across all events contributed to our overall victory.

I would also like to give special praise to **Mr Clare**, whose coaching, encouragement and leadership have been instrumental. What struck me most when I saw the team on the day of the final fixture was the incredible sense of pride and excitement they felt about representing River Academy. The team spirit, morale and determination on display were exceptional. This is a historic achievement for the school and one that everyone connected with River Academy should be extremely proud of.

Young Business Showcase Success



Last Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending the **Young Business Showcase in Reading Town Centre**, and what an incredible event it was.

Out of the 35 teams participating, **11 teams came from River Academy**. To have almost a third of all entries represented by our school is a tremendous achievement in itself.

This success reflects two things.

Firstly, it reflects the outstanding work of **Mr Mo**, whose enthusiasm, organisation and ability to inspire young people ensured that students were fully prepared for their big day.

Secondly, it reflects the quality of the students we have here at River Academy: their creativity,

resourcefulness, initiative and determination to be the very best version of themselves.

The range of products on display was phenomenal, and I was delighted to learn that, collectively, River Academy students generated **over £2,000 in sales** during the event. That is an astonishing achievement with one group making over £500 in profit. Our trio of Lakitha, Lisa and Saanvi P also received the award for the 'Best Product' from the 35 stalls.

I would like to thank:

- Mr Mo for his tireless leadership.
- The parents and carers who supported students throughout the process.
- Most importantly, the students themselves for their hard work, enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit.

What made the day particularly special was seeing students develop and demonstrate skills that will serve them throughout their lives. Communication, confidence, problem-solving, resilience and teamwork were all on display.

A Busy and Successful Week at River

This has been an incredibly busy week here at River as we have welcomed new parents, new staff and new students following the disruption caused by the recent heatwave closure.

On Tuesday evening, we welcomed our new parents to River and had the opportunity to discuss all things Year 7, including transition and matriculation. We were delighted by the quality of the conversations throughout the evening and by the number of smiles on parents' faces as they left. Our waiting list remains strong at well over 70 students, which demonstrates the high regard in which River is held by local families.

On Wednesday, we hosted more than 20 new members of staff for an induction day. This was an important opportunity to share our values and demonstrate how we operate as a school. It was a pleasure to spend time with our new colleagues and to see the quality and calibre of those who will be joining us in September. While many had visited the school during their interviews, interview days can often be a blur. Having the opportunity to spend time in our dining room, tour the school with our students and interact with staff allowed them to experience River more fully. It was particularly heartening to hear so many say, "I am so pleased I made the decision to move to River – a school where I can teach and where students are happy and want to learn." Those comments gave me great confidence and pride in what we are building together.

On Thursday, we welcomed our new Year 7 students. This is always a slightly nerve-wracking event, as students from more than 30 primary schools come together for the first time. Primary schools are wonderfully diverse; many local schools share similar expectations and systems to River, while others have different approaches and philosophies. The day itself was a mixture of socialisation, sample lessons and opportunities to see the school in action. It was remarkable to see how quickly students adapted to routines and instructions, including our use of "Star" to bring everyone together and focus attention. Most importantly, it was lovely to see so many smiling faces at the end of the day.

We have also welcomed a number of visitors to the school over the past two weeks, including headteachers from across the Trust, teachers undertaking work experience placements as part of wider qualifications, Early Career Teachers and undergraduates considering a future in education.

Comments such as these are becoming increasingly common from visitors, and they reinforce just how special the culture at River Academy has become.

One teacher, from a local highly regarded school, could not believe how much content she had delivered in the hour because the students were so well behaved and focused on their work.

It is always a pleasure to hear such feedback, as it reassures me that what we are doing at River is absolutely the right thing. Our students are flourishing academically, demonstrating excellent manners, speaking confidently in full sentences and taking pride in their appearance. As a result, they are receiving an exceptional educational experience.

Attendance celebratory

On Wednesday, Year 7 attendance reached an incredible 99.45%, with only one student absent from the entire year group. To achieve this just two weeks before the end of the school year is remarkable and speaks volumes about how much our students value being part of River Academy. It is a reflection of the strong relationships, sense of belonging and culture of excellence that we have built together. I am also incredibly grateful for the ongoing support of parents in helping to make this possible.



Hot Weather Update



Sports Day

At present, Sports Day is scheduled to take place on **Wednesday 15th July**.

We will continue to monitor the forecast closely throughout the week. Should conditions become too hot for safe participation, we will consider moving the event to the following week when temperatures are currently forecast to be cooler.

Any updates will be communicated via MCAS.

In the meantime, we have been providing extra water and water breaks between lessons to keep students hydrated despite the heat. Fingers crossed it cools off next week!

As we move into the final weeks of another hugely successful academic year, I would like to thank all of our students, staff and families for their continued commitment and support. River Academy continues to go from strength to strength, and I am incredibly excited about what lies ahead.

Have a wonderful weekend and, most importantly, stay cool!

Best wishes,

Handwritten signature of A. Hartley.

Andy Hartley,

Headteacher