

Headteacher's Update

11 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the 2026-27 academic year!

This marks **River Academy's third year of operation**, and it is incredibly exciting to see the school continue to grow from strength to strength. We now have **more than 560 students** attending River Academy, a milestone that reflects the confidence our community places in the school and the hard work of our staff and students.

I have been absolutely delighted with our first few days back.

Welcoming Year 7



Our new Year 7 students have completed four days of matriculation, giving them the opportunity to learn about River Academy, our expectations and the routines that underpin daily life here. They have explored how lessons and dining work, met their classmates, made new friends, sung together, recited poetry, played team sports and experienced a secondary school environment that is, in many ways, very different from the schools they

previously attended.

I have been incredibly impressed by the Year 7 cohort. Their appearance, attitude and determination to embrace River Academy ways have been exceptional from day one. It reflects so well on you as parents, that they have arrived prepared and ready to give this opportunity their best effort.

The four days culminated in a special assembly on Thursday. During the event, students performed *You've Got a Friend in Me*. Following an initial rehearsal that showed promise, they then sang the song with such enthusiasm, confidence and joy that it genuinely made our hearts sing. To see an entire Year 7 community come together and perform in such a positive and spirited way at such an early stage of their River Academy journey was truly inspiring.

Earlier in the assembly, students recited *Invictus*. Once again, I was hugely impressed by the intensity and conviction with which they delivered the poem. Many students already know it by heart and are developing an understanding of how punctuation, rhythm and line breaks can bring meaning and power to a performance.



Celebrating Achievement

Perhaps the most memorable moment of the assembly came when we presented certificates for the **Headteacher's Challenge**.

Thank you to all parents and carers who supported this initiative over the summer.

One of the overall winners was **Everleigh**, whose submission was a beautifully presented booklet documenting her life so far through photographs, illustrations and written reflections. As Mr Bowler held up the booklet, there was an audible gasp from the audience, followed by spontaneous applause from the Year 7 students.

For me, this moment encapsulated everything River Academy stands for. We are building a culture where it is **cool to achieve**, where success is celebrated, and where students genuinely support and respect one another's accomplishments.

The Return of Years 8 and 9

Our Year 8 and Year 9 students returned on Thursday morning and I would like to thank parents and carers for supporting our staggered start to the academic year.

Students arrived looking incredibly smart and ready to learn. It was clear how eager they were to

return to school (although I suspect some parents may have encountered a slightly grumpier version before they left the house that morning!).

I was delighted by the maturity and positivity shown throughout the day. In the afternoon, I visited Year 8 and Year 9 tutor groups as they completed activities designed to remind them of our expectations.

Quite honestly, you could have heard a pin drop.

The focus, concentration and engagement demonstrated by students were outstanding. They met our expectations and then exceeded them.

Appearance

Whilst I have been delighted with the return of the students as they say in sport, 'better never stops'. We have pursued a 'soft start' to the year and given students the opportunity to correct things over the first few days. However, please can I draw your attention to the following:

- There should be no skin fades, or anyone with hair less than grade 1. In addition, there should not be any nicks in eyebrows.
- In terms of jewellery, we are very clear that plain studs should be worn in the lower lobe.
- Make up should not be visible and this includes mascara.

Attendance

Our attendance was phenomenal last year with Year 7 having almost 97% attendance and Year 8 having better attendance (95%) than when they were in Year 7 which is almost unheard of. However, we want to at least maintain and even improve these statistics. As you will see below, Our September Show Up and Show Off initiative is launching with students from Monday. Attendance is so important



both a life skill and a predictor of future academic success and we want our students to get into positive habits from the start of the school year.

Welcoming New Staff

This term, we are delighted to welcome a number of new colleagues to River Academy:

- **Mr Mitchell**- Assistant Headteacher
- **Mr Raza** - Computer Science
- **Ms Chilton-Murphy** - Head of Technology and Art
- **Ms Ismail** - Food Technology
- **Ms Jones** - Science
- **Ms MacDonald** - Mathematics
- **Mr Pearce** - Geography
- **Ms England** - Modern Foreign Languages
- **Ms Zamaan** – PE
- **Ms Armstrong**- English and Bridge teacher
- **Ms Ansell**- Bridge teacher
- **Miss Ratcliffe** – Drama
- **Mrs Graham** – Head of History
- **Mrs Looker** –Head of RPE
- **Mrs Ossei-Brainoo** – Head of Personal Development

In addition, we have also recruited Miss Jennett as SEND Manager, Ms Reza as HLTA, Ms Jewell as Cover Supervisor, Mrs Robinson as Food technician, alongside Ms Pennycott as Finance Assistant, Mrs Lambourn as Behavior Support, Mrs Saunders and Ms Mirza as Teacher Assistants in the Bridge, and Miss Street and Ms Palaniappan as Teacher Assistants in mainstream.

Almost all of these posts are expansion posts, and our staff has increased by 50% to meet the increase in the student body which has been quite a quest!

It has been a pleasure working alongside colleagues new and old over the past few days, and it is already clear that they understand and share the high expectations that define River Academy.

Important Reminders:

School Day Times

Please remember that the school day now begins at **9:05am**, with students expected to be on site by **9:00am**. The school day finishes at **3:40pm**.

These changes have been introduced to accommodate our growing student population and the additional time required at lunchtime.

Sparx Maths

I want to congratulate all of the students who did extra work over the summer as part of our Sparx summer challenge. Around 55% of students took part in this voluntary challenge which is heartening. However, I want to pay particular tribute to the students below who excelled. Please bear in mind that a gold award is the result of approximately 10 hours extra work.

Maths

name	Reg. group	Compulsory XP	Personal Practice XP	Independent learning XP	Total XP earned	
Saanvi	9-THAMES	7020	6300	0	13320	Gold
Season	9-THAMES	8949	2550	1448	12947	Gold
Sheung Sheung Jacinth	9-THAMES	3268	4800	0	8068	Gold
Aashritha	8-KENNET	3117	4650	60	7827	Silver
William	8-LODDON	3418	3000	0	6418	Silver
Hassan	8-AVON	1363	4350	60	5773	Silver
Harsha	8-THAMES	1550	1500	20	3070	Bronze
Kendrick	8-THAMES	1087	1500	0	2587	Bronze
Lakshith	9-LAMBOURN	1080	150	1140	2370	Bronze
Tyrus	8-LAMBOURN	1620	600	140	2360	Bronze
Ethan	9-LODDON	0	2100	8	2108	Bronze
Pranav	8-LODDON	982	0	1099	2081	Bronze
Alman	9-LODDON	975	1050	0	2025	Bronze

Reader

First Name	Reg. group	Extra SRP	Extra SRP	Extra SRP	Extra SRP	Extra SRP	TOTAL	
Season	9-THAMES	14229	3641	3446	3913	1889	27118	Gold
Saanvi	9-THAMES	2173	0	0	0	2060	4233	Gold
Sheung Sheung Jacinth	9-THAMES	0	1543	1558	440	587	4128	Gold
Deeptayan	9-THAMES	4043	0	0	0	0	4043	Gold
Ammaar	8-PANG	2023	124	111	672	692	3622	Silver
Tyrus	8-LAMBOURN	1181	623	1367	54	269	3494	Silver
Hassan	8-AVON	2040	0	0	263	1111	3414	Silver
Likitha	9-LAMBOURN	2539	0	89	0	0	2628	Silver
William	8-LODDON	1075	0	162	398	490	2125	Bronze
Saffi	The-Bridge	1027	777	51	75	73	2003	Bronze
Elliott	8-LODDON	0	0	0	0	1639	1639	Bronze

Science

First name	Reg. group	Total XP earned	
Saanvi	9-THAMES	55705	Gold
Sumaya	8-KENNET	51000	Gold
Sheung Jacinth	Sheung 9-THAMES	50005	Gold
Hassan	8-AVON	45365	Silver
Pranav	8-LODDON	38015	Silver
Pranayaa	9-LAMBOURN	35110	Silver
Jake	9-KENNET	25000	Bronze
William	8-LODDON	19905	Bronze
Alyssa	9-KENNET	13110	Bronze
Helena	9-KENNET	11555	Bronze

A special shout out to Saanvi and Jacinth who will receive the platinum award for achieving gold in all three areas of the challenge. These rewards will be distributed in the next two weeks.

There will be **no Sparx Maths homework this week.**

Sparx will begin next week, with the first tasks going live on **Friday 18 September.**

Electives

Electives begin on **Wednesday 16 September.** As a result, the school day will finish at **4:30pm** on Wednesdays from that point onwards.

Thank you for your support with these arrangements.

Parent Welcome Events

Please keep an eye out for formal invitations to our Parent Welcome Events.

Year 7 Parent Welcome Evening

Wednesday 23 September

Year 8 and Year 9 Parent Welcome Evening

Thursday 24 September

Further details will be sent out next week, and we very much look forward to welcoming you to school.

Finally...

As we reach the end of our first week back, I know I speak on behalf of all staff when I say that we are certainly feeling tired after a busy and rewarding start to the term. However, we are also incredibly excited about the year ahead.

Thank you, as always, for your support, encouragement and trust. Together, we will continue to ensure that every child at River Academy thrives academically, socially and personally.

I hope you all have a wonderful weekend.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink.

**Andy Hartley
Headteacher
River Academy**