

Headteacher's Update

18 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope everybody has had a good week and is settling into the rhythms and routines of the new school year.

News story

Our week has certainly been made better by some great news that was in the Reading Chronicle this week. Of course, we are immensely proud to see this story, but I would also like to thank yourselves for helping to spread the reputation of the school.

[Reading - The 10 most oversubscribed schools revealed | Reading Chronicle](#)

Cow Lane bridges

Additionally, after many months of campaigning I am pleased to report that Reading Borough Council have approved funding to improve the quality of lighting under the Cow Lane bridges. Councillor Wendy Griffith has taken up the school cause in council, and I am so pleased that this improvement will be completed by the time the students return to school after the half-term break and the clocks have gone back.

Portman Road pedestrian crossing

There is also a story in the Chronicle regarding the possibility of a crossing being installed on Portman Road near Tesco. When the consultation goes live, I will share the link with you as this will be another terrific addition to local infrastructure that will further improve the safety of the school journey for so many of our students.

Parking at the end of the day

Please can I ask parents not to park in the forecourts of businesses on Richfield Avenue opposite the school. Understandably, we have fielded a few irritated phone calls from the teams in these businesses, and it is important we work hard to maintain positive relationships with all our neighbours.

Please park in the Rivermead overflow car park or main car park if this is full. Many thanks.

New term, new challenges

Aside from the positive publicity, welcoming an additional 187 students this September has brought both opportunities and challenges. Routines including dining, line-ups, lesson transitions, assemblies and elective activities have all been carefully adapted to ensure the school day runs smoothly.

As we reach the end of the week, I have been delighted by how well students are settling into school life. Across the school, students are becoming increasingly confident, independent and committed to our River values of community, excellence, determination, respect and empathy.

The biggest change has been for our Year 7 students, many of whom have joined us from smaller primary schools or environments with very different expectations. In assembly this week, I spoke to students about behaviour and expectations, and almost every student indicated that their primary school had been noticeably noisier than River Academy.

It is encouraging that across the entire week only four Year 7 students have been removed from lessons. This reflects the positive start that so many have made. While there is still work to do, experience tells us that students adapt quickly, and within a few weeks these routines will become second nature as confidence continues to grow.

Thank you to our students, staff and families for their patience, flexibility and support as we continue to embed these new routines.

Attendance

A huge thank you for your work as parents in getting your children into school. As of Thursday, attendance stands at 97.9% which is fantastic work by everyone. We know that good habits in September spill over into the rest of the year, so this is encouraging. Additionally, it is clear many students want to get hold of a pair of the cinema tickets we are offering for 100% attendance for four weeks from September 14th.

Year 7 and 8 have attendance levels of well above 98% whereas Year 9 is just 96%. My plea to Year

The poster features the River Academy logo at the top left. The main title 'Show Up AND SHOW OFF' is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, it states: 'Students who attend every day for 4 weeks from Monday 14th September will get:'. At the bottom, three rewards are listed in separate boxes: 'A 100% Attendance badge for their blazer', 'A token for a prize draw of 10 pairs of Vue Cinema tickets', and '2 merits for every day's attendance'. On the right side, there is a large orange circle containing the text 'Will you be a 100% attender in September?'.

RIVER ACADEMY

Show Up AND SHOW OFF

Students who attend every day for 4 weeks from Monday 14th September will get:

- A 100% Attendance badge for their blazer
- A token for a prize draw of 10 pairs of Vue Cinema tickets
- 2 merits for every day's attendance

Will you be a 100% attender in September?

9 parents is to ensure that we all work hard to ensure 100% attendance for as long as possible. I have seen too many Year 9s lose good habits because of too many days off for a sniffle or an ache most of which are usually forgotten once they get through the school gates and see their friends.

Languages trip

We had our first school trip of the year yesterday, where 15 Year 9 linguists visited Reading University with Mr Fasham. The feedback was superlative with two pieces of feedback particularly standing out. The lecturer described the levels of vocabulary of "PhD level" and remarked that the students had "spectacular levels of industriousness"!



Parent Welcome Events

I am also looking forward to our Parent Welcome Evenings next week and hope that you have all managed to get the dates into your diaries. This is your chance to say Hi, find out about the year ahead and how you can help as a parent to navigate through the next 10 months.

I am also looking forward to meeting our Year 7 SEN parents for a special presentation from Mrs Clarke and I at 5.15pm on Friday. All presentations will be signposted and will take place in the Main School Hall.

[River Academy - Year Group Letters](#)

Open Evening



The poster for River Academy's Open Evening features a teal background with white text and circular images of school staff and students. The top left shows a man in a suit talking to a student. Below that, two students are shown. At the bottom left, a student is writing. The River Academy logo is at the top center, and the event title 'Open Evening' is prominently displayed. The date and time are listed below the title. Two parent testimonials are included, along with a 'No booking required' badge. The bottom section lists the event details and a list of activities to expect. Contact information is at the very bottom.

RIVER ACADEMY

Open Evening

Wednesday 30 September 17:30–19:45

"The school is lovely and they have a great ethos of helping each other."
Year 7 Parent

"We love it and our child loves it."
Year 7 Parent

No booking required

An Exciting Opportunity to Visit Our School

Our Open Evening will be an exciting opportunity to hear from the Headteacher and staff about what River Academy has to offer your child

What to Expect:

- Presentations from the Headteacher at 17:30 and 18:30
- Subject showcases and enrichment opportunities
- Hands-on activities across departments
- Student-led tours of school

www.river-academy.co.uk 0118 216 0400

I would also like to remind families that our annual Open Evening will take place on **Wednesday 30 September**. To allow staff sufficient time to prepare displays, organise classrooms and ensure the school is presented at its absolute best, we will be closing early on that day. The school day will end at **12.50pm**.

To support students who receive free school meals, we will operate an extended break during the day to ensure all students can access lunch before going home.

As always, we will be looking for student volunteers to support the evening, and I know that many of our young people are already keen to take part. It is always a pleasure to see students returning to school in the evening to showcase River Academy to prospective families. Their pride in their school shines through, and they are often the absolute best ambassadors for what makes our community so special.

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to Annual Open Day of the Abu Bakr Masjid on the Oxford Road. I spent some time with one of the imams before the school opened and was struck by their desire to support education and local community improvement. Please do pop down if you are free on Sunday.

Have a super weekend and thank you for supporting such an amazing start to the year at River Academy.

Best wishes,



Andy Hartley
Headteacher
River Academy