

Headteacher's Update

25 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you have all had a good week and enjoyed the fine early autumn weather we have been experiencing.

Electives



It has been a busy week here at River Academy, not least because of the launch of our new Electives Programme. This is something we are incredibly proud of, and it has been wonderful to see students embracing the vast range of opportunities on offer. This term, we launched 28 different electives, ranging from Pokémon, Chat and Colour, Arabic, rowing, netball, chess and coding, to many more besides. These sessions give students the chance to meet new people, work with different teachers and, hopefully, discover interests and passions that stay with

them long after the elective has ended.



Clubs

Alongside this, we have also launched our wider extracurricular programme. I am delighted by the ever-growing range of clubs available to our students as our staff team continues to expand. Please see below for details of all the opportunities currently on offer.

W/c Monday 28st September					
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Before School		Early Bird	Early Bird		Early Bird
During School		CS Python Club - breaktime	EARLY FINISH: 12:50pm	Keyboard Club - breaktime	
After School	Rowing Club	Band Club Girls' Football Year 7 Basketball Champions' Hour Drama Club		Years 8 and 9 Basketball Champions' Hour Girls' Netball	Band Club Reading Rockets Linguistics Club

Music!

I am particularly pleased that Mr Abiola is offering regular after-school music clubs for our students. Developing our music provision is something I am very keen to do. Sadly, however, Mr Abiola will be relocating at the end of this term, and we are currently recruiting for a Head of Music. If you know anyone who may be interested in this exciting opportunity, please do share the vacancy link included later in this newsletter.

[Curriculum Lead for Music at River Academy, Reading, Berkshire | MyNewTerm](#)

Parent Welcome events

This week also saw our Parent Welcome Evenings, and I have been incredibly pleased with the turnout. We welcomed over 90 families to the Year 7 evening and around 65 families to the Year 9 event, with a slightly smaller but still positive attendance at the Year 8 evening.

These events are incredibly important. They provide an opportunity for parents and carers to

understand what the school does, what students need to do to be successful, how families can support learning at home and, perhaps most importantly, the reasons behind many of the decisions we make as a school.

Thank you to everyone who attended. I would also like to thank Mrs Billingham, our Heads of Year and all staff involved in delivering the Year 8 and Year 9 presentations.

The slides are also within this mailshot if anyone missed the presentations but would like to read through.

Open Events

We have also hosted several **Open Mornings** this week and welcomed many prospective families into the school. One theme has consistently emerged from the feedback we have received: just how positive, enthusiastic and proud our students are. Visitors frequently comment on how proudly our young people wear the River Academy badge and what excellent ambassadors they are for our school. This is wonderful to hear and reflects something we work extremely hard to achieve every day. I was also pleased to see a leading educator with their Year 5 daughter in attendance at one of the events as this is someone who has worked in a number of local schools before going on to greater things and her very enthusiastic praise for all we do and are achieving is a great vindication of our efforts.

Looking ahead, next week sees our annual **Open Evening**. To support the event, school will close early on **Wednesday 30 September**, with students finishing at **12:50pm**.

We will extend lunchtime to ensure all students, including those entitled to free school meals, have sufficient time to eat before they leave for the day. I am also delighted at just how many of our students will be helping us. At last count this is in the region of 200, acting as guides, musicians, speech givers, or departmental helpers- we are so pleased so many want to be a part of this event.

Attendance

Attendance has started the year in an extremely positive fashion. Our current attendance rate is **well over 97%**, and we are once again ranked **first in the local authority** for attendance. Thank you to all parents and carers who have worked so hard to establish excellent habits from the very start of the academic year.

As you know, in a couple of weeks we will be giving away 10 pairs of cinema tickets to students who have achieved **100% attendance since the start of term**, and we are looking forward to making that draw.

Celebration!

Today sees the first of our Celebration Assemblies of the year. These events are always a highlight, and I cannot wait to see the faces of our students, particularly our Year 7s, as they experience their first River Academy celebration assembly.

I am also pleased that Mr Bullard, Chair of Governors, will be joining us. I look forward to showing him the school in action and sharing the many successes our students have achieved during the

opening weeks of term.

Inclusion Support

Finally, I would like to tell you about an area of the school that I am particularly excited about, our new Inclusion Space. Located near the main entrance, this area comprises two classrooms. One will provide a calm environment where students can regulate and reset when needed, while the other will be used to deliver targeted small-group interventions and support. It will be manned by Miss Hinton, our new team member Ms Lambourn, Ms Hopper, and a range of other professionals.

This development builds on our existing pastoral and wellbeing provision, which includes two counsellors who work with students each week, a basketball mentor who supports students for a day and a half each week, and a boxing mentor who provides support for half a day each week.

We are passionate about ensuring that every student receives the support they need to thrive. However, despite our best efforts, it is not always possible for us to know about every challenge a young person may be facing outside school. If there is anything happening at home that you feel may be affecting your son or daughter, please do contact their Head of Year.

Families can access referrals into our counselling and support services, and we will ensure that any relevant information is shared appropriately with our Inclusion Team so that we can provide support where it is needed most.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful weekend. The forecast looks promising, and I look forward to welcoming our students back on Monday.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Hartley".

Andy Hartley
Headteacher
River Academy