

Headteacher's Update

9th October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are all well and have enjoyed the last two weeks as we continue to build momentum and settle into the rhythm of the term.

The school has been incredibly busy, particularly with our Open Mornings and Open Evening. Across the eight Open Mornings held before and after the summer holidays, together with our Open Evening, we believe that more than **600 families** have now visited River Academy. This is extremely encouraging as we approach the **31 October application deadline**, and we hope it will once again lead to the Academy being oversubscribed for entry in **September 2027**.

Throughout these events, the real stars of the show have been our students. Whether leading tours, representing their departments, delivering speeches, or meeting prospective parents and carers, they have been exceptional ambassadors for the school. The feedback we have received has been unanimously positive. I am immensely proud of our students and feel privileged to be part of the River Academy community.



Alongside this, we have continued to focus on ensuring that all staff receive regular support and developmental feedback. It is particularly important that our new teachers quickly become familiar with our teaching and learning approach, as well as our high expectations and standards. I am grateful to **Mrs Billingham**, who leads an additional meeting every Wednesday morning for our new colleagues, helping to ensure they are fully supported and able to thrive within our culture of excellence.

We record all lesson observations through an online platform called **StepLab**, enabling staff to receive prompt, specific feedback on their teaching. This allows professional development to be highly targeted and responsive, ensuring that we continue to improve the quality of education we provide for our students every day.

Attendance

Our attendance since returning after the summer holidays has been absolutely phenomenal, with overall school attendance currently standing at **96.7%**. Our Year 7 students have truly hit the ground running, with their attendance rate currently at an impressive **98%**. Pleasingly, all year groups are performing well above national averages, demonstrating the commitment of both our students and families to ensuring excellent attendance.



Home Learning

In addition, I was delighted to see that last week's completion rates for **Sparx Maths**, **Sparx Reader** and **Sparx Science** all reached **100%**. Our systems are designed to support students in completing their work consistently and developing the strong learning habits that will serve them well throughout

their education and beyond. This commitment to independent study has, in turn, contributed to some remarkable outcomes, particularly in relation to improvements in reading ages and mathematical progress over the past two years.

As our home learning programme has begun to increase over the last week, we have noticed that a small number of Year 7 students have found staying organised a little challenging. As parents and carers, please continue to make full use of the **Class Charts** app and regularly check that your child is completing all of their assigned work (do double there are no more questions on the next page!), whether this is within their home learning booklets or online.



SLTea

I am looking forward to seeing a number of you at our next **SLT Coffee Morning** on **Thursday 15 October**. As outlined in the invitation sent earlier this week, this is an

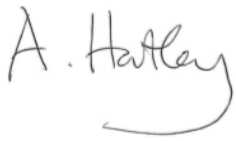
informal opportunity to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, enjoy a cup of tea and a biscuit, and discuss any questions, thoughts or suggestions that you may wish to raise. These events are always valuable opportunities for us to hear directly from parents and carers, and we greatly appreciate the feedback and perspectives that you share.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award

Lastly, I am also very much looking forward to the launch of our **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme** on **Monday 19 October**. This is an exciting milestone for the Academy and another fantastic opportunity for our students to develop resilience, leadership, teamwork and independence beyond the classroom. I would like to thank **Mr Clare** and his colleagues for their hard work in organising the programme. I am particularly grateful to **Mrs Cole**, who will be leading this evening's parent presentation while Mr Clare is enjoying a well-deserved period of paternity leave.

Have a wonderful weekend, everyone. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the Academy. I look forward to welcoming your sons and daughters back for **Week 6 of the half term** on Monday.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Hartley
Headteacher
River Academy

