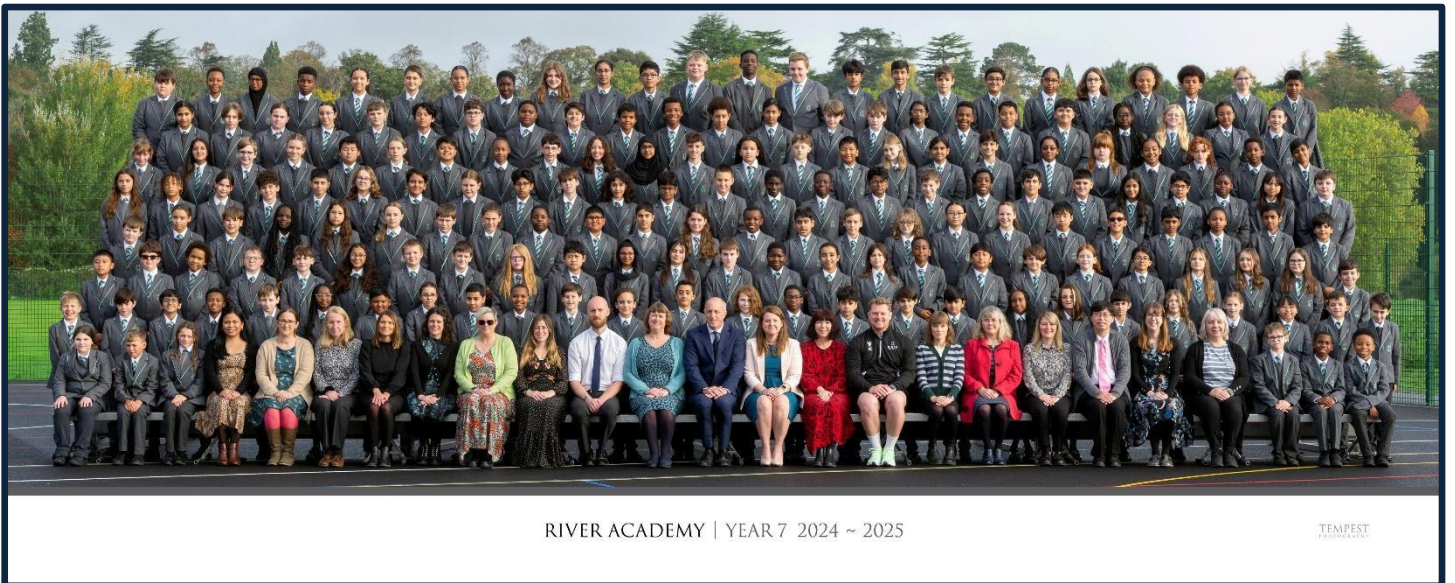




RIVER ACADEMY

Parent Handbook



RIVER ACADEMY | YEAR 7 2024 ~ 2025

TEMPEST
PRODUCTION

Welcome to the Class of 2026 – 2031



MAIDEN ERLEGH
TRUST

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Headteacher Welcome

Dear Parent/Guardian

Welcome to River Academy!

We are thrilled to welcome you as the third cohort of parents of our fantastic school.

We hope this handbook will explain some of our school routines and systems and provide you with some important information that will affect your child.

Your child will also receive their own handbook, which we hope you will enjoy reading. Please take some time over the next few weeks to sit down and go through the booklets with them so that they understand and feel excited about the next phase of their education.

We are also delighted to be able to share our information booklet to support your understanding of the school. We understand that the transition to a secondary school is a huge step for students and their families and as a new school perhaps that nervousness is even greater. I hope that via our transition day, this parent event, meeting members of our team and reading through this information, you feel reassured about the fantastic experience your children will have at River Academy.

We have high expectations of our students because we understand that every lesson matters and I make no apologies for this. We will be expecting our students to behave in an exemplary manner because we know that they are capable of this. However, we will also be supporting our students through lots of walk-throughs and rehearsals to understand what is expected of them and how important each and every school day is. Support for any students needing 'a little extra' will be available but the emphasis will be very much on developing students and scholars who work hard and apply themselves to every aspect of school life.

We are so lucky to have recruited a wonderful and well-qualified staff body to work with your children and this will make a great difference in ensuring their time at school is productive and successful.



Please see overleaf details about my Headteacher's Challenge. This is an important opportunity for all students, and I encourage all parents to support their child in this endeavour. We very much look forward to meeting you and working together with you and your child throughout their secondary education.

Mr Andy Hartley,
Headteacher

Headteacher's Challenge:

We would like all students to produce a piece of work that tells us something about themselves. This could be a photo montage, a model, a film, a mind map, a painting or any other medium that would best communicate each child's story. Please complete this over the summer and bring to their first day on Monday 7th September.

Tutors and senior staff would use these pieces of work as a way of gaining insights and understanding of our new intake of students.

There will be prizes for the very best pieces of work, both in terms of effort, accomplishment, and ingenuity.

Head of Year 7

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am delighted to introduce myself as the Head of Year 7. As we embark on this exciting journey together, I am thrilled about the opportunities that lie ahead. At River Academy, each student will be allocated into a tutor group, where they will receive personalised support and guidance from our experienced tutor team. Students will see their tutors each day, ensuring they have a robust support network to help them settle in and thrive during their time at Secondary School.

We are deeply committed to fostering an environment where every student can develop, flourish their unique talents, and feel secure. Our priority is to create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where students are encouraged to pursue their academic and personal growth confidently. My role is to facilitate your child's success at school and ensure that they feel happy and safe. To do this effectively I will work in partnership with staff, students, and parents. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me for assistance, to address concerns and support your child. I want to ensure that their experience at River Academy is both rewarding and fulfilling.

We understand that starting secondary school can be a daunting experience. Rest assured, we are here to support both you and your child every step of the way. We aim to alleviate any fears and make this transition as positive and seamless as possible. During their first week at River Academy, we will gradually introduce them to the routines and expectations of Secondary School life, ensuring they feel comfortable and confident for the year ahead.

Thank you for choosing River Academy. We look forward to a wonderful year ahead!



Mx Abi Bowler
Head of Year 7

Communication

Communication from River Academy is via telephone call, the Classcharts app, email or letter. It is therefore extremely important that you notify the school of any changes in telephone numbers, email addresses and home address. Copies of all generic letters are held on our website, so that you may access this information at any time.

Contacting us about your child

Our main job is to teach and care for your child and the overwhelming majority of staff time during the day is committed to lessons, meetings, scheduled tasks etc. We cannot guarantee that a particular member of staff will be available at any given time, or that they will be able to reply to correspondence or messages immediately.

We ask you to understand also that our teachers will be teaching several classes and more students than primary school colleagues. This may make them less immediately accessible than perhaps you are used to. We do, however, want to hear from you and respond to any questions and concerns, but the process may feel different.

If you contact us, we will respond within 72 hours of receipt unless the issue is urgent (e.g. a safeguarding concern).

If you have a query or wish to pass on some information, you may wish to ring or email the school (river@maidenerlegghtrust.org). Please put the name of the member of staff or the department in the subject line.

If you wish to speak to someone, please ring or email the school reception to make an appointment.

Coming into school

If you do need to come into school, in the interests of security, we ask that you always report to reception first.

If you are coming into school for an appointment and have mobility issues, please let us know so that we can make arrangements to meet you somewhere appropriate.

As you are aware, the areas immediately outside the school are busy at the start and end of the school day so it would be helpful if you need to pick up your child, to arrange to do so a little way away from this area. The Richfield Avenue Garden Centre car park may be used for these matters. There is limited parking on site for use at other times.



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In order to maintain the safety of the children, please do not bring your car onto the school site between the hours of 8.00am and 4.50pm unless:

- (a) You have a pre-arranged appointment with a member of staff
- (b) Either you or your child has a mobility issue
- (c) You are collecting a sick or injured child

The School Day

Our school day begins a little later than other local schools. This has been designed to support punctuality in an area of heavy traffic. Students are expected to arrive punctually to school and at lessons.

You will notice there is a later finish on a Wednesday. This is so that all students can complete an Elective activity. This could be a new sport, a music club, a Maths or an Art club; whatever the choice maybe it is an opportunity to try something new that enriches the school experience. **However, please note that this is a compulsory part of our school week.**

Please take note of the timings of our school days

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday	
Time	Activity
09:05– 09:30	Tutor
09:30 – 10:30	Lesson 1
10:30– 10:50	Break
10:50 – 11:50	Lesson 2
11.50 – 12.50	Lesson 3
12:50 – 13:50	Lunch
13:50– 14:45	Lesson 4
14:45 – 15:40	Lesson 5

Wednesday		Friday	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity
09:05– 09:30	Tutor	09:05 – 10:00	Lesson 1
09:30 – 10:30	Lesson 1	10:00 – 10:55	Lesson 2
10:30 – 10:50	Break	10:55 – 11:15	Break
10:50 – 11:50	Lesson 2	11.15 – 12.10	Lesson 3
11.50 – 12.50	Lesson 3	12:10 – 13:10	Lunch
12:50 – 13:50	Lunch	13:10 – 14:05	Lesson 4
13:50 – 14:45	Lesson 4	14:05 – 15:00	Lesson 5
14:45 – 15:40	Lesson 5	15:00 – 15:20	Celebration Assembly
15.40 - 16.30	Elective		

Breakfast

The canteen opens at **8.30am** for Breakfast Club. Students can purchase a variety of snacks such as fruit, pastries and drinks.

Break

During break, students have time to visit the canteen to purchase healthy food and get some fresh air. Students can eat snacks and have a drink at that time. They are encouraged to bring a water bottle with them, which can be refilled at break and lunchtime. No glass containers should be brought to school. Sugary drinks or canned drinks should not be brought in, nor can they be purchased at school.



Lunch

Students have the option of bringing in a packed lunch or purchasing lunch from the canteen. Students will be expected to sit down in our canteen to eat their food whether it is a packed lunch or one of our meals. We will also be using this opportunity to ask the students to engage in community activity, whether it be a topic of discussion, a poem recital, or gratitude. Students will have 30 minutes outside to play/chat/socialise in addition to their mealtime.



If your child wants to buy food at school, they will need approximately £3.50 per meal to be paid via ParentPay. Students will receive their pin number on the first day, to enable them to pay for their lunch. If they bring a packed lunch, please do not include cans or glass bottles.

Getting to/from School

Many students will get a bus into school; however, our local students will either walk or cycle to school, which is a great way for them to keep active. Keeping students safe is very important to us and we want them to get to and from school safely. Please note, it is a requirement for all students cycling to school that they must wear a helmet and have lights on their bike and we ask that students lock their bike on arrival.

Bus

The number 18 bus drives past the River Academy site and its route and timetable can be found [here](#). Furthermore, there are a number of routes that come from the town centre or through Caversham that drop off approximately 500 metres from the school and details of which can be found [here](#).



We expect our students to conduct themselves in a safe and appropriate manner whilst travelling to and from school. Bus passes are issued through Brighter Futures for Children, however Reading Buses can withdraw the right to use the pass if students are unable to behave appropriately. Please see the Brighter Futures website if you need to order or replace a bus pass.

Walkers

Young people can often be distracted when out and about (by their friends, their phones, their music etc). Please can you remind them to be vigilant when crossing roads or car parks, but also to keep to the footpaths, rather than walking in the road. We ask that all students cross Richfield Avenue via the Tiger crossing outside of school.

Cyclists

Please ensure that your child has a bike that is in roadworthy condition and that they are aware of basic road safety, as the roads around the school can be busy.

We insist that all students who ride a bike wear a cycle helmet, as doing so has been proven to reduce the risk of fatal head injury by 88% in the unlikely event of a serious accident. We will be making checks that everyone arriving by bike has a helmet, lights and roadworthy bike during the first few weeks of school. If students do not wear a cycle helmet when riding their bike, they may lose the right to ride to/from the school site.



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In school, students must not ride their bike on the pedestrianised areas of the school site. They must remember that they share the other areas with cars. They should ensure their bike is locked with a padlock on one of the racks provided for students at the front of the school.

Car

The roads around River Academy can be busy, especially at the start and end of the school day. Cars are not permitted to wait or park in front of the school. If students are being collected, then we ask that you park in one of the allocated parking spaces by the Garden Centre.

Medical / First Aid

A number of our staff are qualified in First Aid and can attend to medical emergencies; they are trained to deal with students and staff who become ill or get injured during the school day.

We run regular update training sessions for our staff for a range of conditions, including EpiPen administration.

Chronic medical conditions

Where we are notified that students have or develop a chronic medical condition, we work with the student and their parents to establish a Medical Health Care Plan, which will ensure that the student can participate safely in as many of the school's activities as possible. It is imperative that the Medical Health Care Plans are completed and returned to school promptly.

Medication in school

We do not provide any medication for students.

The only exceptions to this rule are the following and with the written consent of a parent:

- the emergency administration of pre-prescribed auto-injector (Epipen) and Salbutamol inhaler (which has been provided by the parent)
- other prescribed medication which can be self-administered
- painkillers such as paracetamol where parents have specifically brought these in for us to keep in our medical cupboard

If your child requires repeated administration of medication during the school day, then you will need to complete a Medical Health Care Plan. Please contact the school to discuss such requirements.

Medical information

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure the medical information we have about their child is up to date and correct. This is the information we use during the day, on trips and would pass on to the emergency services if necessary. If there are any changes, please inform the Medical Welfare Officer in writing as soon as possible.

If your child is unwell during the school day

Students must report their illness to the Medical Welfare Officer in Student Services. If we believe that it is in the student's best interest to come home, then you will be contacted. If a student feels unwell in lesson, their teacher will send them to Student Services, where the Medical Welfare Officer will assess them and call you if they need to speak to you.



Pastoral Structure

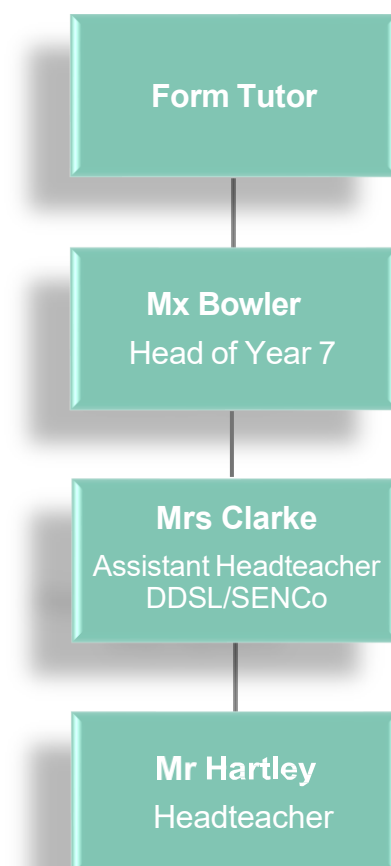
Contacting School

Your child's form tutor is your initial point of contact for the school. Any general enquiries, questions and concerns should be directed to them. These might include behaviour, attendance concerns, support or progress. Where appropriate, form tutors will forward these onto the Head of Year. If you have any subject specific questions, then these should be directed to the relevant subject teacher or Head of Department.

If your child needs help at school, then they should speak to their form tutor who will either help to resolve the issue or signpost your child to the appropriate member of staff who can support.

Providing strong pastoral care throughout a student's career with us is extremely important to ensure that a student feels happy and supported. We have a very clear structure for pastoral support but if you are in any doubt, contact your child's tutor or Head of Year.

For students in Year 7 the critical contacts in the Pastoral Team are:



Inclusion Team

The Inclusion Team aims to ensure your child is supported both with their well-being as well as their academic achievement. We firmly believe that pastoral care underpins academic success and that every child should be supported to reach their potential, regardless of any barriers to learning they may have.

Currently, the Inclusion Team comprises Ms Hinton, Deputy DSL and Behaviour Support/Family Worker and our teaching assistants, who can provide check-ins and support in small groups. This team will grow for our third year of opening.

We use both internal and external professionals to help us provide support for our students that include:

- 1:1 check-in with Teaching Assistant
- Emotional Literacy support in small group with Teaching Assistant
- Building Resilience in Young Minds mentors
- Reading Inclusion Support in Education advice
- Brighter Futures for Children SEN Team advice
- Educational Psychologist advice
- Reading FC Community Trust Alternative Provision
- RAW Mentoring Alternative Provision
- JAC Alternative Provision

Tutor/Teaching Groups and Houses

Tutor Groups

There are six tutor groups in Year 7. Each tutor group has approximately thirty students and they are all mixed ability and designed to be both diverse and inclusive.

While students may have friends who join the school at the same time, in order for them to integrate best, it is important that they interact with as many new students as possible. We do not guarantee that friends will be put together in tutor groups. Indeed, our experience shows us that they feel more part of the community in the long run and also form new and lasting friendships as a result of being “mixed up” in the beginning. You may be surprised how quickly they adapt.

Students will meet with their tutor group to register each morning. During these sessions, the tutors share notices and information with students, e.g. opportunities for involvement in student voice and enrichment activities. They will also check ‘Tools for Learning’ and deal with individual issues as necessary as well as following our Tutor Reading programme.

Teaching Groups

Some of your child’s lessons will be taught in tutor groups. The exception being subjects where class sizes need to be smaller, such as technology, to allow for appropriate health and safety requirements to be met. Students will be set in Maths and Science, based on prior attainment data. Adjustments will be made during the school year based on student performance.

Houses

The House System at River Academy is a core aspect of our ethos, to recognise and celebrate good behaviour, academic attainment as well as successes outside the classroom. Your child will be assigned a house, and house events take place throughout the school year where students can earn merits for themselves and their house. Merits can also be earned in lessons for sustained good work, excellent homework, attending extra-curricular clubs and for demonstrating a positive attitude towards learning.

Students with the most merits will be rewarded with certificates and praise events. The number of points each house has accumulated will be shared and celebrated during house assemblies, in our school newsletter and on displays around the school.

Within the house system there are also leadership opportunities as students can apply to become House Ambassadors and House Captains. Within these roles, students are given

responsibility to plan, organise and run house events and help in promoting their house and all house events.

The six houses are: **Thames, Kennet, Pang, Loddon, Lambourn and Avon.**

A Usual First Week

Students will arrive at around **8.50am** and head to the rear courtyard. From there, they will line up with their tutor and go to our welcome assembly. There will be a programme of four days of events and activities designed to make sure each and every student is 'River ready'.

They will spend some time in the morning with their tutor getting themselves used to being in school and getting to know the members of their tutor group.

Over their first six weeks at River, Year 7 students will go through the process of 'Matriculation.' Details will follow in late August. But we will spend their first four days settling students into their new groups, building bonds within their houses and with staff. This will ensure they understand what it means to be a student at River and have chance to practice with feedback and support from staff. This means that when they start their timetable on the 10th of September, they will feel confident and know what success looks like.

Over the following weeks they will then be supported to engage in school life through:

- Using the Learning Resource Centre (LRC)
- Attend a silver programme session
- Engage with our Math's problem of the month
- Attend an extra-curricular sports club
- Attend a curiosity extra-curricular club
- Contribute to a lunch time discussion
- Learn how to recite a poem
- Contribute to their elective
- Contribute to interhouse
- Gain a merit in each value - Excellence, Determination, Community, Respect and Empathy and in each subject they study.
- Complete their Sparx homework
- Have excellent attendance over their first half term.

We will then invite you to an event in the Autumn term to celebrate those students who have achieved 'Matriculation' and identify those students who have engaged with the 'River Way' above and beyond, by awarding honors at an evening event at River in the Autumn term.

We want to ensure that we have your parental support of students over this matriculation period to engage in all that school life has to offer your child.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning at River Academy

“Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

(Durant, discussing the writing of Aristotle, 1926:87)

At River Academy, we believe in providing the very best chances of success for every student, every day. This is achieved through consistency and alignment in everything that we do.

In the classroom, we expect the focus to be on teaching and learning at all times. Excellent behaviour for learning will be achieved through consistent expectations which are shared explicitly with all students and modelled until they become habit. Teaching pedagogy across the school is aligned to ensure that, firstly, we are delivering the curriculum in the most effective way possible, and secondly, so that the routines of lessons are ‘normalised’, allowing teachers to focus on the students in front of them, and students, the task at hand.

We understand that the nature of each subject may mean that The River Way is applied in slightly different ways. However, students can expect routines to include: high level questioning, use of ‘turn and talk’, choral responses and silent independent practice and self-marking, all of which supports students to successfully master and remember new knowledge.

Evidence shows that students learn best when they are participating and intellectually active in lessons, therefore teachers will expect 100% of students to engage with 100% with the lesson. Teachers will provide an environment where students are able to think hard, and this thinking will lead to long-term learning.

Therefore, the following common practices will be seen in most lessons:

- ‘Do Now’ retrieval exercises at the start of each lesson to recap previous knowledge
- Lots of teacher-modelling with students copying best practice before students work independently
- An expectation that everyone participates in discussion and answers questions
- Strong behaviour for learning routines to ensure crisp lesson starts and transitions between activities
- Students working from booklets with pre-written questions
- Students redrafting and improving work based upon feedback and guidance
- Staff checking for understanding through questioning and the use of mini whiteboards
- Homework that supports the understanding and content of the lesson

Our goal is that every student is stretched, with no student falling behind. This will ensure that all students have the maximum number of choices available to them for the next, and every, step of their education.

Attendance and Punctuality

At River Academy, we expect all students to achieve a minimum attendance rate of 96%, as regular attendance has a significant impact on academic achievement and overall success in school. We pride ourselves on excellent attendance and in 2025/2026 our overall attendance had been 95.5% and we wish to continue this outstanding accomplishment into 2026/2027.

If your child is absent, you must report the absence each day **by 8:30 a.m.** using the Class Charts app. If you are unable to report the absence through Class Charts, please email riverattendance@maidenerleghtrust.org. Any attendance-related queries should also be directed to this email address.

Where possible, you should arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If this is not possible, we ask that you book appointments either early in the morning or towards the end of the school day to minimise disruption to learning. Your child should attend school before or after their appointment, even if they are only able to attend for part of the day.

When reporting a medical appointment on Class Charts, please include the appointment time and whether your child will arrive late or need to be collected early. You should also upload evidence of the appointment using the evidence section in Class Charts.

If your child is unwell, please refer to NHS guidance when deciding whether they should remain at home.

Following changes in legislation, schools can no longer authorise leave during term time unless exceptional circumstances apply. If you need to request an absence of more than one day, you must complete the absence request form available on the school website and submit it **at least 15 days** before the proposed absence. Approval will only be granted at the Headteacher's discretion. Please note that family holidays taken during term time are not considered exceptional circumstances. If your child will be absent for a single day, you should report the absence through Class Charts rather than completing an absence request form.



Uniform and Equipment

Uniform

Linked to our traditional values, we have a traditional uniform. This is something which is supported by staff, governors, parents and students.

We expect parents who send their children to River Academy to support us in maintaining uniform and personal presentation standards.

Our partner school uniform stockist is Stevensons in Reading who are the only suppliers of items bearing the school logo (<http://www.stevensons.co.uk>). It may, however, be possible to obtain other items elsewhere, but they must be identical in style to Stevensons' product.

Stevensons stock mandatory branded items. Otherwise, other items can be purchased in general clothing shops or supermarkets.



Main School Uniform

Mandatory Branded Items

- River Academy blazer (boy or girl cut)
- School tie
- PE/Sports top (boy or girl cut)

Mandatory Generic Items

- White shirt or blouse
- Grey trousers, (tight drain leg trousers are not permitted) **OR** grey drop waist pleated skirt (worn just above the knee) **OR** long tailored grey school style shorts.
- A black/navy/grey salwar may be worn under the skirt for religious reasons
- Black/grey socks



Shoes

- Students should wear polishable black school shoes with no logos
- Boots, trainers, canvas shoes, sports brand shoes etc. are not appropriate and students should not wear them
- Shoes should be sensible i.e., not have thick soles or high heels/wedges

Please note that any student that arrives in the incorrect uniform will be loaned the correct uniform from our school stock so that they may integrate into the school community for the rest of the day.

Skirts should always be in the drop waist style as per the links below and should be of the length prescribed.

[John Lewis Girls' Adjustable Waist Panel Pleated School Skirt, Grey](#)

[Amazon - Trutex Junior Drop Waist Pleated School Skirt School Uniform](#)

Please see below for an example.



Shoes should be school shoes and not trainer style.

Please see below for examples.



Physical Education Kit

- River Academy PE/Sports unisex polo top
- Black PE shorts or skort
- Black sports socks
- Football boots
- Non-marking trainers
- Shin pads and mouth guard

Optional Generic Items

- Plain black pullover/sweatshirt or River Academy unisex jersey top
- Plain black tracksuit pants
- Plain black leggings
- Plain black or navy coat or anorak
- Plain black, navy, grey turbans/headscarves/hijabs



Personal Appearance

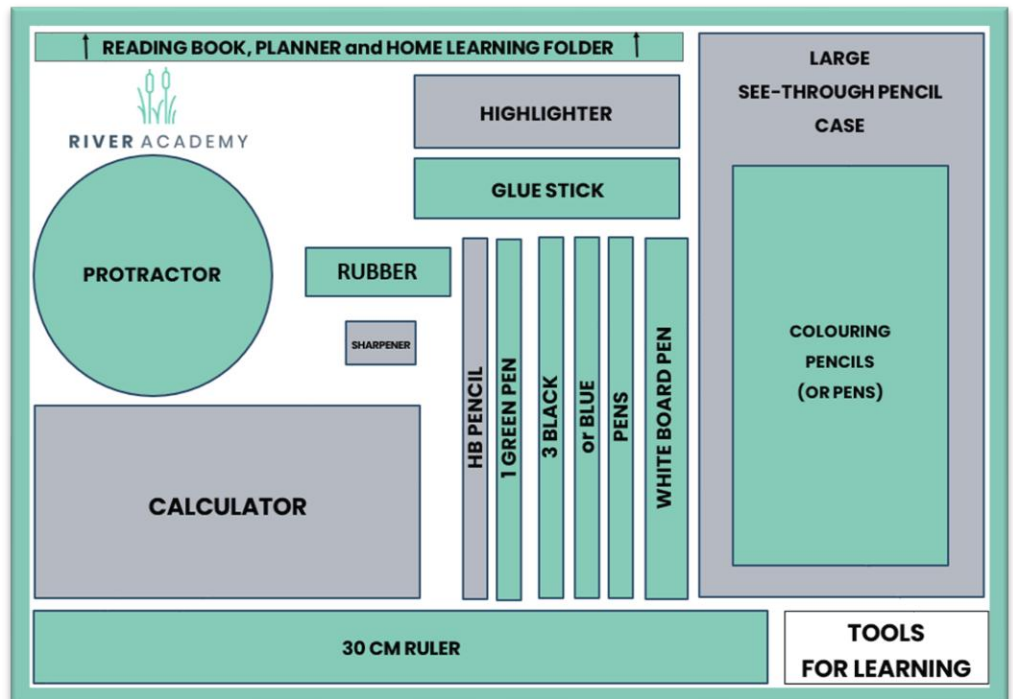
- Well-groomed hair/facial hair (no extreme styles). **Nothing shorter than grade 1 please.** Shoulder length and longer hair to be tied back during PE, design, art, science and food lessons for health, hygiene and safety reasons
- Natural coloured hair
- One small silver/gold stud in the lower lobe of each ear only
- No other jewellery should be worn to school
- Head scarves may be worn for religious reasons by agreement and should be plain black, grey, or navy
- School uniform should be worn appropriately (e.g. ties done up, shirts tucked in, shoelaces tied etc.)
- No make-up or nail varnish except light foundation
- Smart watches are not permitted in school

Equipment

Students should come to school fully equipped with their “Tools for Learning” each day. We strongly recommend they organise themselves around their timetables. The following equipment is required every day:

Tools for Learning

- Large see-through pencil case
- Three black or blue pens
- Green pen
- HB pencil
- Rubber
- Pencil sharpener
- 30cm ruler
- Protractor
- Highlighter pen
- Whiteboard pen
- Scientific calculator
- Coloured pencils (or pens)
- Glue stick
- Reading book
- Planner with A5 see-through case
- Sparx Book
- Home Learning Booklets in folder



The calculator we recommend is the [Casio FX-83GTCW](#). Students will be taught how to use this in math lessons so please try to purchase this model.

These items will be available for students to purchase from Student Services during break and lunchtime if a student needs to replace an item at any time.

Students should have a sturdy and sensible backpack so that they can carry their equipment and books around safely.

Lockers

All students in Year 7 have the opportunity to use a locker. Locks are available to buy through ParentPay or you can provide your own.

Lost Property

All property should be clearly named, and students must take responsibility for their belongings. Please remember that every child is wearing an identical blazer and tie, and so a clear label is vital.

Students should not bring items of value into school, and they must understand that they do so at their own risk.

If an item is mislaid, it is helpful if this is reported immediately at Student Services, as this is where lost property is kept. Students will be advised to check in all the areas they have been in that day as well as tutor areas and PE areas. Students should check back at Student Services on the following day if this item has not been immediately found.

Behaviour and Expectations

Our Approach to Behaviour

Our vision for River Academy is a school where we have an impeccable climate and atmosphere, both inside and outside of the classroom, so that all students can thrive. Every student at River Academy has the right to learn in an environment free from disruption, therefore we have high expectations of behaviour in every aspect of school life. Every student reaching their potential is realised when students meet our extremely high standards of courtesy, respect for authority and self-disciplined study.

School Values

At River Academy we have five simple school values: **Determination and Excellence, Respect, Empathy and Community**. We believe that everything can be drawn back to these five school values. We should refer to them at every possible chance when interacting with others in our school.

Whilst we will be going through the behaviour expectations with the students in detail at the start of term, we ask that you support our expectations of:

- Wearing our uniform correctly
- Being correctly equipped
- Working silently and calmly at all times
- Moving around the site calmly and respectfully
- Being respectful to all of our staff
- Following instructions at the first request
- Using positive manners
- Completing all homework to the best of their ability
- Using digital technology safely and within the school guidelines

Detention

Detention is a consequence of poor conduct and/or failure to complete homework. Students are expected to attend and failure to do so will result in an escalation of sanctions.

Detention will either be a 15-minute breaktime detention or a 40-minute after school detention on the day that the behaviour occurred. We will inform you of these events through the Class Charts app or text message. Our Behaviour Policy is available on the school website and contains full details of all rewards and sanctions that we apply.

Home Learning

The Core subjects of English, Math's and Science will set Home Learning every week through the Sparx online platform. Most other subjects will set Home Learning fortnightly. Please see our website for further information.

Home Learning is recorded via the Class Charts app. Students will be given their login details during the first week of term. Parents / Guardians will also be able to monitor the Home

Learning being set using the **Class Charts app**. Log in details will be sent home to parents and guardians via email. (Class Charts is also used to view merits and demerits, attendance and contact details).

We run a Home Learning club after-school every Tuesday and Thursday. The Learning Resource Centre (LRC) will also be open from 8.30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday for Early Bird drop-in. A member of staff will be on hand to support students to work quietly and constructively in these sessions. We may ask that your child attend these sessions if they are struggling with their work. Home Learning is a key part of our academic approach, and we are determined that no student is allowed to fall behind, therefore if Home Learning tasks are not completed, or completed to a sub-standard, a same day after school detention will be set to allow the student to complete the work appropriately.

If your child needs more than a minimum amount of help with a particular piece of Home Learning, encourage them to complete the work to the best of their ability and sign their planner to indicate that they have done so. They should then seek help from their teacher the following day. If Home Learning is consistently taking your child longer or proving to be a burden, please get in touch with your child's tutor.

For the most part, Home Learning will be set in Home Learning Booklets and run alongside the work being completed in class. These booklets will include Knowledge Organisers, which share the 'totality' of the unit of work and tasks will be linked to these. Knowledge Organisers are an excellent tool for parents to see what their child is learning.

In English, Science and Math's, students will complete their Home Learning via the Sparx Reader, Sparx Science and Sparx Math's online platforms. These resources provide an excellent, individually tailored approach, e.g. in Math's and Science the level of difficulty matches the student's current ability, and in Sparx Reader, texts are offered based on the students' current reading ability.

Typical homework tasks are:

- Rote learning (learning off by heart)
- Structured worked examples
- Applying knowledge and understanding (e.g. problem solving)
- Topic review/consolidation of notes
- Consolidation of skills, knowledge or understanding
- Research or preparation for learning in the next lesson (flipped learning)
- Practicing examination techniques
- Revision for an examination or assessment
- Vocabulary development
- Acting on formative feedback (DIRT)

Good Home Learning Routines

Each day your child should enter brief details of the actual homework set in their planner. This is a reminder for them, as well as for your information. Further details of the homework task can then be accessed on the Class Charts app.

Many children benefit from the right type of help from their parents. Here are some of the best practices which we would encourage:

- Look at the planner and Class Charts app together each day and discuss what Home Learning is to be done and encourage your child to share this experience from day one.
- Completing Home Learning the day it is set, even if it need not be done for two or three days. If there is a problem, then the student has time to seek help.
- Planning out together when and where your child will do his/her Home Learning, ensuring a clean and tidy study space, negotiating breaks for food, socialising with friends and favourite television programmes. Ultimately, we want students to be able to organise their own time and to have a balanced attitude to work and leisure.
- Getting your child to explain their Home Learning and learning from class to you. Praise your child's work as much as possible. Emphasise what you find informative, clear or imaginative and avoid dwelling on errors.

Parents also often ask us how they can support or extend their child's learning in each subject. A really helpful habit is to ask your child to tell you about the lessons they had today. Rather than an open 'did you learn anything?', encourage them to give you a brief run-down. Describing the content and skills they practice (known as 'Retrieval Practice') is one of the best ways of trying to embed new knowledge and understanding into their long-term memory.

Make use of your child's Home Learning Booklets where you will find Knowledge Organisers to support these discussions and retrieval.

Support and challenge for all

Every single student is important and every term, when we review progress, teachers, curriculum leaders, heads of year and senior leaders check if there are students in classes or groups who need some support or perhaps just a nudge.

In this way, we ensure that students who need help have opportunities to access it. Teachers will do this directly with your child or may contact you as well to help support.

Rewards

Recognition Systems

We believe in celebrating excellent behaviour, effort, and achievement. We recognise our students for making positive choices.

Two of our core values are **excellence** and **determination** and we believe in students having intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations for good behaviour. In other words, we want our students to make good choices, not because they think they will win a prize but because they know it is the right thing to do. This means that we recognise and celebrate children once they have done something brilliant, rather than offering up a prize as an incentive from the start.

Merits

When students are displaying the school values, they will receive merits. This is logged through

the school's Class Charts system. Over each term merits will be tracked and shared in assemblies, with points also available for house competitions, culminating in prizes at the end of the term.

Celebration Assemblies

Every Friday afternoon there will be a short assembly recognising the positive achievements that have occurred during the week. This is an important marker for our community as we celebrate our successes and show gratitude for those who have supported us to achieve them.

Golden Phone Calls

Each member of staff will make a call home each week to a student who has displayed the River Academy values in their actions and work during that week.

Other Recognitions

Students may also be recognised at various points throughout the year for sporting excellence, academic excellence or for their involvement in an elective. During line up individuals or groups can be nominated for a 'shout-out' by any member of staff for their success in demonstrating the school values.

We would like to be made aware of the successes that students have outside school so that we can recognise these achievements as a community. We appreciate being informed by parents, or the students themselves, and would like the opportunity to celebrate these successes.

Expectations for the start of Year 7

To ensure that your child gets off to a good start here, we would like to ask for your support with the activities listed below:

- Please can you take the time to talk to them about the transition they are going to make and reassure them. The move to secondary school can be a time of mixed emotions and tiny worries can needlessly become big ones.
- Please can you ensure that your son/daughter has the correct school uniform and equipment. This will help them fit in and be part of the River Academy community from day one.
- Help them to be organised and independent by showing them how to plan ahead using their timetable and planner to pack their bags, encouraging them to write down clear information about homework, tests and appointments and also taking responsibility for passing on information between school and home.

We would like to thank you in advance for your co-operation and support. We are looking forward to the new school year and your child joining us at River Academy.

The Curriculum

Curriculum Intent

The curriculum at River Academy is rich and carefully constructed. It is relevant, aspirational and accessible for all. At River Academy, students at all stages are provided with opportunities to develop confidence, broaden individual skills, deepen knowledge, and advocate academic excellence. In turn, this promotes a love of learning by fostering the intellectual, creative, moral and spiritual development of all students and helps to ensure that they are fully prepared for the next stage of education and the working environment.

Preparing students for excellent outcomes that meet their individual potential sits at the heart of all we do at River Academy. However, the curriculum is also about providing a wealth of opportunities for students to be the very best version of themselves; articulate, thoughtful, confident citizens who are ambitious for themselves and keen to contribute to the community.

The objectives for our curriculum are:

- To meet the needs of our students and keep as many options open to them as possible
- To secure the best possible academic results for all our students
- To ensure high quality learning over time
- To ensure substantial knowledge and language acquisition
- To practise and develop transferable skills development
- To prepare students for the next phase of their education or employment and life in modern Britain
- To develop well-rounded, confident and open-minded young adults

The delivery of our curriculum is underpinned by:

- Rigour, high standards, coherence
- A core of essential knowledge in the key subject disciplines
- Freedom for teachers to use professionalism and expertise
- Memorable experiences which put learning in a wider context
- A wide range of opportunities for personalised stretch, challenge and support
- A range of rigorous assessment opportunities which support high quality of information advice and guidance for students and parents
- A rigorous programme for personal development and character education (including SRE and preparation for life in modern Britain)
- Varied option choices for all groups of students including the most able and SEND
- Varied progression routes for all students

In Year 7

The Year 7 Curriculum is designed to stretch the students quickly beyond their Key Stage 2 base but also to allow them opportunities to solve problems and think critically, thereby developing their understanding and skills. More information can be found on our website.

All students follow a common curriculum which is designed by the curriculum leaders and their teams to best support the learning required in KS4.

Core:	English Maths Science
EBACC:	Geography History Modern Foreign Languages (French)
Extension:	Art Computer Science Drama Design and Technology Food Technology Music Physical Education (PE) Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Personal Development

Extra-Curricular and Enrichment

Extra-curricular and enrichment activities are excellent opportunities for students to develop existing skills and interests and discover new ones. They enable students to develop a range of “soft skills” from teamwork to leadership and from communication and resilience. They are also a great way of making new friends!

In-School Activities

There are many exciting activities that take place regularly during and after school at River Academy. In addition, students will be given the opportunity to represent their house in events and competitions and get involved in other events such as fundraising, sports fixtures, spelling bee, Athletics and much more.

Electives

Every Wednesday at 3.40pm we will be holding our weekly electives programme. These clubs will allow students to experience and learn another skill or develop a passion in something that is not part of the formal curriculum, but is nevertheless beneficial in terms of character development, physical development and/or intellectual stimulation.

The students will select an option for the first term from a list provided. The list will be published in September. Here are some examples we were able to offer last year:

Active	Creative	Curiosity
• Netball • Football – RFC coaching • Hockey • Rugby • Basketball • Cricket • Rounders • Softball • Badminton • Table Tennis • Athletics • Cross Country • Fitness • Gymnastics • Trampolining • Rowing • Fitness	• Choir • Drama • Poetry by Heart • Air Dry Clay • Music Technology • Photography • Chat and Colour • Crochet • Biscuit factory • Computer Music • Band	• Art • Card Games • Chess • Theatre • Debate • Gardening • Mock Trial • Japanese and Korean • Myths and Legends • Young Business Award • Crest Science Award • Scratch Coding • Royal Holloway

Trips and Visits

Every child at River Academy will have access to a wide variety of offsite trips during their time at the school to complement the classroom-based provision. Trips may be extra-curricular and offer the opportunity to build cultural capital or be a critical aspect of a subject's curriculum.

This year all our students have been to the pantomime or west end show in London. Year 7 students visited a variety of sites in Reading, their hometown, to explore their local area. All Year 7 students had the option of attending the PGL residential. We also have students in Year 8 attend the Maiden Erlegh ski trip and offered a rewards trip to Go Ape. As well as bespoke small group trips to London, University of Oxford, Reading and Holloway.

Provision for the More Able

River Academy is committed to ensuring that more able and gifted students have the necessary opportunities to:

- Use and develop their abilities
- Explore their interests
- Excel academically

We also ensure that they can grow and develop in an environment where being more able and/or gifted is respected by all and that their achievements are celebrated. The Silver and Gold programmes run throughout the school and students are periodically afforded additional opportunities through being a member of these groups.

At River Academy we provide enrichment opportunities, to ensure pace and challenge in lessons for all students, including the higher ability and gifted.

On arrival in Year 7, students are identified as more able based on their Key Stage 2 scores. Class registers will identify these students and teachers will use this information to ensure that lessons and homework tasks stretch them sufficiently. All departments will have specific strategies for meeting the needs of high-ability students, and schemes of work will show what provision is made for them.

In 2025/2026 nineteen different extra-curricular activities were scheduled. Gifted and Talented students were targeted for these events, but all students could attend.

These events included:

- Climate Change Workshop
- Introduction to Latin
- UKMT group challenge workshop
- Why are there so many new apartments in Reading? Lecture
- Introduction to sports analysis
- Jane Austen: How a Reading girl invented the modern novel. Lecture
- Brains behind the brawn
- Italian for beginners
- Linguistics Olympiad
- Victorian Reading. Lecture



- Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration
- Classics for All Day
- How does Mythology impact on our modern world?
- Planetary Defense. Lecture
- Villains – why do we love them so much?
- UKMT Math's challenge preparation
- Heart dissection
- World Oceans Day
- Visiting Author: Kirsty Capes.

Additionally, 127 of our students participated in the UKMT Junior Maths Challenge. 91 of our students achieved an award in the Junior Math's Challenge. 5 students were involved to attend the next Kangaroo round, one of whom was awarded a Gold award here too. This demonstrates the impact our stretching curriculum is having on students' outcomes.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Overall approach

At River Academy, we seek to be student-centred in our approach to SEND. Our inclusive offer is rooted firstly in Quality First Teaching in our classrooms. Teacher-led lessons through use of a visualiser and our bookletised curriculum support our students with additional learning needs. Consistency of teaching The River Way by all teachers; calm compliance in the classroom; quiet focus; all increase access to taught content for our students with SEND. By maximising time spent in class we build behaviours for learning, resilience, self-esteem, and good learning habits. Our TAs are not deployed in class; they support with interventions building skills and resilience.

At River Academy, we work to ensure that our students are known and noticed. Our new Inclusion Tracker monitors all barriers to learning for all our students. We use the Inclusion Tracker to identify students' needs, and plan support accordingly. We work in partnership with the parents of our highest need students, so they are aware of the support their child receives at River Academy.

Our SENCO maintains an open dialogue with staff, parents, external professionals and, of course, the students themselves, in order to identify need: to plan support; to implement the bespoke interventions led by our support staff; and to monitor progress and ensure support is appropriately targeted and regularly reviewed for impact.

Students with SEND have equal access to broad offer of extra-curricular activities. Our wider curriculum also provides a wealth of opportunities for all students to be the very best version of themselves: articulate, thoughtful, confident citizens who are ambitious for themselves and keen to contribute to their community.

The Bridge is River Academy's Moderate Learning Difficulty Resource Base. Our 7 students are taught and supported by experienced teachers and support staff. Using our best endeavours and making reasonable adjustments, we seek to provide appropriate support to meet the needs of our MLD students, guided by the specific provisions stated in Section F of their EHCPs.

Provision in The Bridge aims to build success for our students with Moderate Learning Difficulty by increasing their skill acquisition, confidence and independence in a smaller group setting, in a calm, quiet space. Students will have ease of access to the mainstream school to allow them to enter specific lessons, as appropriate. Careful assessment of baselines and monitoring of progress help ensure that success can be measured, and provision adapted.

If you have a query related to your child's special educational needs you should contact **Mrs Clarke, Assistant Headteacher and SENCo**.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

At River Academy we take safeguarding and child protection issues very seriously.

Key Staff:

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs Christina Tuhy
Deputy Safeguarding Leads	Mr Andy Hartley Mrs Laura Billingham Mrs Becky Clarke Mr Jamie Rosser Mrs Fatou Ceesay
Family Liaison Worker	Ms Kellie Hinton
Head of Year 7	Mx Abi Bowler

Safeguarding and Child Protection covers a range of topics including:

- Child Abuse
- Internet Safety
- Mental Health
- Radicalisation
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Child Sexual Exploitation

If you are concerned about the safety of your child, or another child, please contact Mrs Tuhy, or any of the staff mentioned above (indeed, contact any member of staff).

If you are worried about a child and cannot reach anyone in school, then you can report this directly to the NSPCC on **0800 800 5000** or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

If you are concerned about the conduct of an adult, please contact Mr Andy Hartley, Headteacher, or Mr Paddy Bullard, School Advisory Board member with responsibility for safeguarding.

If we have a concern about your child, in the vast majority of cases, we will inform you and ensure you understand exactly what we are doing about the concern raised.

In some, albeit rare, circumstances we do not have the authority to alert parents. In those cases, you would be contacted by colleagues from other agencies who will explain the situation to you.

Anti-Bullying

Bullying is any act carried out by a group or individual, repeatedly over time against a target who cannot defend themselves, that intentionally causes harm, either physically or emotionally. Bullying behaviour may be direct or indirect.

Direct forms include physical violence and threats; verbal assaults and taunts; the destruction of property; extortion; unwanted sexual interest or contact.

Indirect forms of bullying include ignoring and the withdrawal of friendship; excluding; malicious gossip and spreading rumours; abusive or oppressive graffiti (this includes cyber-bullying).

River Academy targets all forms of bullying and is particularly concerned to take-action in relation to any incidents, which involve race, culture, country of origin, sexism, disability, giftedness, homophobia, transphobia or biphobia. In such cases, these issues will be specifically addressed with the bully (and their parents/guardians where appropriate) in the course of post incident management.

We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and target it through prevention as well as reacting quickly to any reports we receive.

Students learn about bullying through our personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (Personal Development - PD) programme, assemblies and visiting speakers and in curriculum time. In PD they learn about what to do if they have a concern about themselves or others. We appoint students as anti-bullying and wellbeing ambassadors who run drop-in sessions at breaktimes for other students to use if they need someone to talk to.

Students are encouraged to report any concerns that they may have to a teacher as early as possible.

For full details please see our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#).

2026/2027 Term Dates

Autumn Term

07 September - 23 October 2026

03 November - 18 December 2026

Spring Term

04 January - 12 February 2027

22 February – 25 March 2027

Summer Term

12 April - 28 May 2027

07 June - 23 July 2027

Professional Development Days (school closed to students)

Thursday 03 September 2026

Friday 04 September 2026

Monday 02 November 2026

Tuesday 20 April 2027

Friday 02 July 2027

2026/27 Term Dates – MET Schools

September 2026							October 2026							November 2026							December 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027							February 2027							March 2027							April 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28							28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	
31																											

May 2027							June 2027							July 2027							August 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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30	31																										

Calendar Key										Number of days											
		Term Time (first day for students/pupils 07/09)									Inset Day for all schools								Autumn Term		69
		Bank and Public Holidays									Inset Day for JRS and BHP only								Spring Term		54
		2026/27 School Holidays									Inset Day for all schools apart from JRS and BHP								Summer Term		67



Contact Information

General Information



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