



RIVER ACADEMY

Student Handbook



Welcome Year 7

September 2026



MAIDEN ERLEGH
TRUST

Headteacher Welcome

Dear Year 7 Student

Welcome to River Academy!

We have put this handbook together to give you some ideas about starting your new school, to answer some of the questions that you may have and to let you know about life here. We hope that it helps you to feel a bit more comfortable when you arrive for your first day.

There is a lot to read but do not worry if you cannot take it all in at once - we do not expect you to know everything in the first weeks and, anyway, it will all seem much clearer when you are actually here!

I am so delighted you are going to be with us in September. We will have a lot of great lessons and events that will make your time at school fun and interesting. Make sure you take advantage of all these opportunities!

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the school, then you can ask your parents to contact us.

We wish you a very happy and successful time at River Academy.



Mr A Hartley
Headteacher



Mr A Hartley
Headteacher



Mrs L Billingham
Deputy Headteacher



Mrs B Clarke
Assistant Head/SENCo



Mx Bowler
Head of Year 7

A Typical First Day

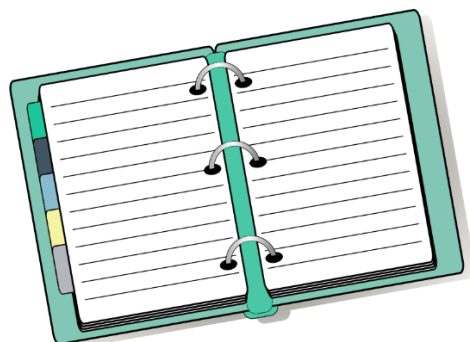
On your first day in September be at school for 8.50am.

When you arrive, Mx Bowler and other staff will meet you at the entrance to the school, on Richfield Avenue. You will gather in the rear courtyard and your form tutor will collect you from there and take you to our Welcome Assembly.

You will then spend some time in your tutor room. Whilst you are with your tutor in the morning you will be introduced to your tutees and will undertake a number of challenges.

For the first four days you will be given a lot of support in how to be successful at River Academy. This will include how we dress, how we eat together, how we work in lessons, how we move around site and show gratitude. This period is known as 'matriculation' and designed to help you confidently start your lessons 'River ready'!

Do not worry, your tutor is going to be able to answer lots of your questions on your first day.



What do you need on your first day?

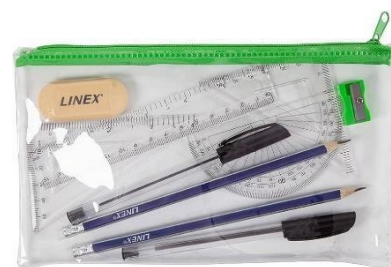
On your first day come perfectly dressed in your uniform and bring the following in your school bag:

- This handbook
- Your 'Tools for Learning' (or around £14.00 to purchase these on your first day)
- Possibly a packed lunch or a snack for break (but you will be able to purchase food here)
- A bottle of water
- Your completed 'Headteacher's Challenge'

Tools for Learning

At River Academy students take pride in their learning and have a responsibility to make sure they are prepared for their lessons. We have a list of equipment, your 'tools', which you must bring with you to school every day:

- ✓ Large see-through pencil case
- ✓ Three black or blue pens
- ✓ Green pen
- ✓ HB pencil
- ✓ Rubber
- ✓ Pencil sharpener
- ✓ 30cm ruler
- ✓ Protractor
- ✓ A pair of compasses
- ✓ Scientific calculator – Casio FX-83GTCW
- ✓ Highlighter pen
- ✓ Whiteboard pen
- ✓ Scientific calculator
- ✓ Coloured pencils (or pens)
- ✓ Glue stick
- ✓ Reading book
- ✓ Planner with A5 see-through case (this will be provided)
- ✓ Sparx Book (this will be provided)
- ✓ Home Learning Booklets in folder (this will be provided)



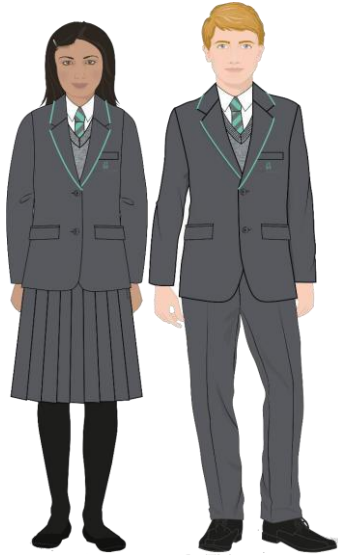
A hairband is also required for subjects that require this for safety reasons, such as: PE, science, design & technology and food technology.

You need to remember to bring your Home Learning folder and planner each day as well as your PE kit when needed, so get into good habits and check your timetable and bag **the night before**. *Ask someone at home to help you if you need support.*





Uniform



You will probably have lots of different feelings when you put on your new uniform. You might feel strange or nervous, but we really hope you will feel proud and that you will try to look your smartest at all times.

Stevenson's are the official suppliers for the school uniform. Uniform can be purchased by visiting their shop or their website. Your parents or guardians will have received a full list of what you need.

Make sure all your school clothes have your name in them. If you lose something, it is much easier to return it if we know who owns it.

You must take pride in your personal appearance by following these expectations:

- Natural coloured, well-groomed hair / facial hair (no extreme styles and grade one is the shortest hair that we will allow).
- One small silver/gold stud earring in each ear only (in the lower ear lobe) and no other jewellery.
- No nail varnish or make-up.





The School Day

You should be at school by 9.00am, ready for registration and tutor time to start. Between 8.30am and 9.05am you will have time to use your locker and get your bag ready for the day.

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	
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
15.40 - 16.30	Elective

Friday	
Time	Activity
09:05 – 10:00	Lesson 1
10:00 – 10:55	Lesson 2
10:55 – 11:15	Break
11:15 – 12:10	Lesson 3
12:10 – 13:10	Lunch
13:10 – 14:05	Lesson 4
14:05 – 15:00	Lesson 5
15:00 – 15:20	Celebration Assembly



Timetable

You will be given your new timetable by your tutor. Each week might look like the one below.

AM	7 LAMBOURN... JAN, ADA	AM	7 LAMBOURN... JAN, ADA	AM	7 LAMBOURN... JAN, ADA	AM	7 LAMBOURN... JAN, ADA	AM	7 LAMBOURN... JAN, ADA
1	7LA/FR5, 1-43 JNE	1	7Y/MA1, 1-23 STR	1	7LA/ART5... LUR	1	7Y/EN1, 1-24 EMY	1	7LA/PE5, SH JCL
BR1		BR1		BR1		BR1		2	7Y/MA1, 1-23 STR
2	7Y/SS4, 1-23 STR	2	7LA/RE5, 1-20 LUR	2	7LA/SC5, 1-22 JCL	2	7LA/PD5, 1-43 AHA	BR1	
3	7Y/TE3, 1-28 ADA	3	7Y/EN1, 1-24 EMY	3	7Y/MA1, 1-23 STR	3	7LA/SC5, 1-22 JCL	3	7LA/FR5, 1-42 RCL
LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
4	7LA/CS5, 1-19 TAU	4	7LA/SC5, 1-22 JCL	4	7Y/EN1, 1-24 EMY	4	7LA/HI5, 1-21 JAN	4	7LA/SC5, 1-27 MDU
5	7LA/PE5, 1-28 ADA	5	7LA/MU5, 0-62 OAB	5	7LA/GG5, 1-21 JAN	5	7Y/MA1, 1-23 STR	5	7Y/EN1, 1-24 EMY
AS		AS		6	7R/ELE5, DS JCL	AS		AS	

In each rectangle you will see the **class code** on the left, next to that is **the classroom**. On the right is the teacher code. When you are given your timetable by your tutor, they will make sure you understand it and know where you are going. They will explain what each of the codes mean, so you know what subject you have, when, where and with which teacher.



The Canteen

The canteen opens at around 8.40am for breakfast. They offer fruit, pastries and drinks.

At break time you will have 15 minutes to have a snack, get some fresh air and use the toilet. You can also fill up your water bottle in this time - please note the school will not be selling bottles of water or fizzy drink, therefore you should bring your own re-useable water bottle.

You may want to bring your own snack from home, or you can buy a snack from the canteen. At break time they offer a range of items including fruit, pastries and drinks.



Lunch Time

At lunchtime you have 30 minutes to get some fresh air and use the toilet. You will also have 30 minutes to eat your lunch.

All students will be eating in our dining room. There will be pre-set seats and you will be expected to clear the tables after you have finished. There will also be some topics of conversation for you and your table buddies.

If you want to buy lunch in school, the approximate cost is **£3.50** a day. You will pay for this via Parent Pay because we do not accept cash. Each student has their own pin number, and these will be given to you when you join us in September. Some students choose to bring lunch from home.



Drinks

Bring in a refillable water bottle with you to school. You can fill this up at water-stations across the school. You are not allowed to bring in fizzy drinks, energy drinks, cans or glass bottles. If you bring them in, they will be confiscated.

Home Learning

You will be given a Student Planner during your first few days. You will stick your timetable into it and will also record any Home Learning that you are set. This is a precious book, which you must not lose, and must always carry with you.

Your tutor will explain how to use it. You should show your planner to your parents. Your tutor will also look at your planner occasionally during tutor time.

Home Learning is set on the Class Charts app. You will be given your login details during the first week of term. Your parents/guardians will also have their own login so that they can keep an eye on the Home Learning that you are being set and what you have been doing. There is an App you can download onto your phone – if you wish to. We will show you how to log in during the first week.

Make sure you meet your Home Learning deadlines. If you need help, it is important that you ask for this before the deadline. If Home Learning is not complete on the deadline, or it is completed to a sub-standard level, you will get a same day after-school detention to ensure that you can catch up.

Every day you should try to re-cap that day's learning. Reviewing and practicing new knowledge is the best way to remember it! Plus, it means if you realise you do not understand it, you can ask your teacher for help.

Home Learning Tips

- ✓ It is a good idea to try and do your Home Learning on the night that it is set. Then if there is anything you do not understand you can find your teacher and ask them before it is due in.
- ✓ Find a space in your house that can be your 'Home Learning spot'. Make sure it is a clean and tidy workspace.
- ✓ Decide on a Home Learning routine that works for you. Maybe you do your Home Learning as soon as you get in from school and that way you have the rest of the evening to do other things.
- ✓ Get into positive Home Learning habits and make sure you are checking your planner / Class Charts app for your tasks.

Champions' Hour and Early Bird – Home Learning support

At River Academy we have Champions' Hour that runs on Tuesday and Thursday after school. During this time, you can access school computers and printers. There will be a teacher present to assist you. 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. If you are struggling with your Home Learning routines and are unable to complete the work, we will ask you to stay behind for our 'Catch-Up Club' so that you can get into the correct routines.

Tutor Groups

Your tutor is one of the most important people to you at River Academy. We will have six tutor groups in Year 7. You will see your tutor for registration each morning and we hope that you will see them as someone you can trust, someone whose company you enjoy and to whom you can turn to for help. You will be taught some, but not all, of your lessons with your tutor group too.

You might want to see your tutor if:

- You fall out with your friends
- You win a competition inside or outside school and want to share that success
- You feel that you are being picked on by other students
- You have some ideas for activities which you could do as a group
- You want to share some good/bad family news
- You are getting tired or disorganised
- You have been somewhere interesting
- You have done some excellent work that you are especially proud of
- You have received merits
- You do not understand some work you have been given and are reluctant to ask the teacher who set it

Your tutor is there to help, support and guide you. They will work very closely with Mx Bowler and will make sure that you are safe and feel safe whilst at school. The most important thing is that they care about you and want you to do well.

You will be allocated to your tutor group ready for the Transition Day in June. Whilst you may not meet your tutor on this day, you will meet them on Day 1 in September.





Houses

Our House System is made up of six houses:

- Thames
- Kennet
- Pang
- Loddon
- Lambourn
- Avon

Your tutor group will belong to one of the six houses. House events take place throughout the school year where you can earn merits for yourself and your house. Merits can also be earned in lessons for sustained good work, excellent Home Learning, attending extra-curricular clubs and positive attitude towards learning.

Students with the most merits will be rewarded with certificates and praise events. The amount of merits each house has accumulated will be shared and celebrated during celebration assemblies, in our school News Stream (newsletter), in the Headteacher's weekly letter and on displays around the school.

Within the house system there are also leadership opportunities as students can apply to become House Ambassadors, House Mentors and House Captains. Within these roles, students are given the responsibility to plan, organise and run house events and help support staff in promoting their house and its events.



Attendance

You should ensure that you are at school by 9.00am every day. If you are absent, you should ask whoever is at home to record your absence on the Class Charts app by 8:30am so that we know where you are. If you are late to school, you must sign in at Student Services. If you do not register in the morning and there is no reason given, then a member of staff will contact your parents/guardians.

Attendance Letters

At the end of each term those students that have achieved 100% attendance or have improved their attendance considerably will receive a special letter.

Appointments

Medical and dental appointments should not be made during school hours unless it is impossible to do it at another time. If you must go to an appointment, then your parents/guardians must email the school office or write a letter and you will need to show this to a member of staff in Student Services. When it is time to leave the school site, you must sign out at Student Services.

It is really important to be at school as much as possible. Research shows that students who attend school (and you should aim for as near to 100% as possible) achieve more.



Attendance Ladder

How close are you to reaching the top?

Perfect!	100%	On average a student with 100% attendance achieves 8 or more GCSEs
Very Good	97%	Even if your attendance is 97% you have still had 6 school days off a year
Good	95%	9 school days off a year means you are down to 95% attendance Your chances of success at GCSE are reduced!
Needs improving	90%	You might think 90% attendance sounds ok, but you have missed over three and a half weeks of school
Danger zone	< 90%	Less than 90% attendance means you have been off for 1 month or more Your chances of success at GCSE have been massively reduced!

Frequently Asked Questions...

What do I do if I am feeling ill?

If you feel ill during a lesson, then you should let your class teacher know. If you are feeling ill during break or lunchtime, then you should go to Student Services, they will decide whether your parents/guardians need to be contacted and if you need to go home.

If I lose something, what should I do?

Retrace your steps and look in the classrooms and places you have been during the day. Lost property is located in Student Services, so if you cannot find it then visit Student Services and a member of staff will let you know if it has been handed in.

If I have trouble understanding something in class, what should I do?

Ask your class teacher to help you, that is what they are there for and they will be happy to help. You can also let your tutor know and they will be able to help you talk to the right people and get support.

I am unhappy/worried, what do I do?

Let your tutor know how you feel, they will be able to talk this through with you and make sure you get the right help and support. You might want to talk to your Head of Year, Mx Bowler, or Mrs Tuhy.

What do I do if I need help?

Sometimes, you might feel a little fed up or feel like you just need somebody to talk to. Life can be difficult sometimes, and there can be good reason for this, but sometimes we can feel a little down and not know why. There are a lot of different people available to speak to at school, and if we cannot help, we always know somebody who can.

If I am worried about something that has happened at home, who do I talk to?

Your tutor is there to help and support you and if something has happened at home they can discuss it with you. Remember that you can talk to any member of staff that you feel comfortable talking to about things that have happened at home.

Getting to/from School

Most of you will travel to school on foot, by cycling or by bus. The bus routes that pass River Academy are operated by Reading Buses.

Where do I get my bus pass from?

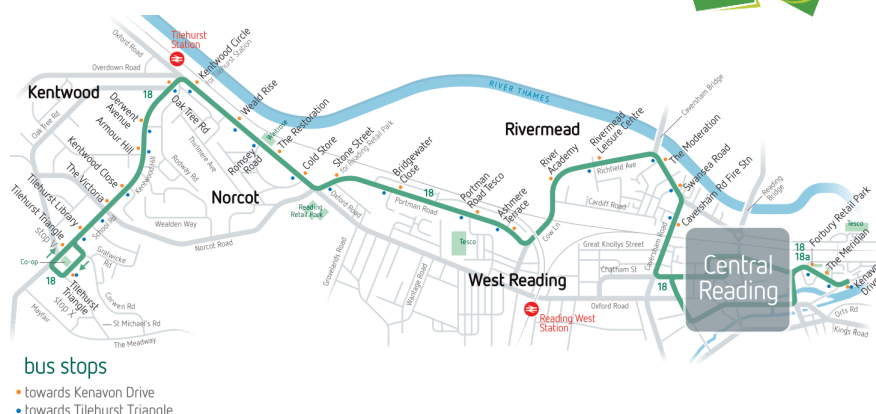
Bus passes are ordered through Brighter Futures for Children, this is done online at <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/forparents-carers/schools/transport>. The Reading Buses website will give you all the information you need about bus stops and times, so you can work out where you need to wait for the bus in the mornings. You will need your bus pass with you every time you ride the school bus. If you lose the pass your parent/guardian will have to inform Brighter Futures for Children and place an order for a replacement bus pass.

Where do I go at the end of the day?

At the end of the school day, you must leave the school site in an orderly way. This is a busy time of day, and vehicles will be driving around the school site, so please be mindful of this.

Conduct on the school buses

We expect you to conduct yourself in a safe and appropriate manner whilst travelling to and from school. The bus service is a public service and so it is important that you are positive representatives of the school.


BUZZ
18

Cycling to / from school

Many students will enjoy cycling to and from school. There are wide pavements and cycle lanes around the school site which provide a safe environment for students to do so. However, the area around River Academy is also busy with lots of cars and traffic, so it is important that you are prepared fully and behave appropriately when using a bike.

It is important that you make sure that:

- Your bike is in good condition, with lights fitted for darker journeys
- You wear a cycle helmet at all times
- You are mindful of other pavement/road users
- You have a padlock to lock your bike in the racks provided at the front of the school

Please be warned that failure to wear a cycle helmet may result in you losing the right to ride your bike to/from the school site.

School Expectations

We will go through our behaviour expectations with you in detail in September, so you are clear on how to behave.

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

Below are the kinds of behaviour that we expect from you at all times:

- 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
- Complete all Home Learning to the best of your ability
- Using digital technology safely and within the school guidelines

Everything we do is to ensure that school is a calm and positive experience for you. We want you to come to school knowing that if you do the right thing you can learn, make progress and be recognised for doing the right thing.

Phones

Please note that we will be asking you to hand your phone in at the start of each day. Phones can be incredibly disruptive to school life with students often using them to message each other, to bully and intimidate and to intentionally distract from the purpose of school which is to study and make academic progress. The phones will be kept in a safe place during the day and returned as you leave site. Students who do not hand in their phone and are then caught using a phone will earn a same day detention, and the phone will be confiscated until a parent can collect the phone.



Rewards and Sanctions

We like to reward you when you get things right. That might be for a good piece of work, contributing well in class, putting a lot of effort into something that you have been asked to do, or for helping the school community. Whatever it might be, we have a lot of different ways of saying 'well done':

- Merits
- Golden Phone calls
- An award in our end of week Celebration assemblies
- Prizes and events
- Invites to trips
- Letters home
- Shout-outs at line up

Sometimes teachers might ask you to stay behind for a chat after the lesson. This might be to help improve a piece of work, ensure you understand something you have been learning or to discuss ways to make sure you have a positive attitude in the classroom.

Occasionally, you may not get things quite right and this might mean that you receive a consequence. Consequences range from a verbal discussion with a teacher, to detentions ranging from 15 minutes to 40 minutes. Sometimes detentions are at break time and for more serious things it will be after school on the same day that you got something wrong. Your parents will be notified if you receive detention, and you are expected to tell them about what has happened at school so that it is not a shock to them.

A lot of students go through school without ever having detention, and we hope that you will be one of them.





**RIVER
ACADEMY**

The River Way

Developing our knowledge, skills and character...



**...so that we can go on to lead happy, successful
lives, as drivers of our own destinies.**

Ultimately, we are supporting you to be happy, successful individuals who take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes. Not because you want merits, but because it is the right thing to do.

But we know that this is a journey – and we will guide you all the way!

Teaching and learning

Teaching and Learning is the foundation of what we do at River Academy, and we work hard to make sure that every student is provided with a calm and purposeful environment where they can show their best efforts and make excellent progress.

Routines in the classroom

You will find that your teachers use consistent routines across the school. These include:

- STAR in 3, 2, 1 – a signal for your attention and silence
- Turn and Talks – where you share your ideas with your partner
- Choral Responses – where you all respond together
- All hands up – where you give your best effort, not necessarily the right answer

We use the same routines so that you know what to expect across the school. These routines then become habit – and make your experience much easier.

100% at all times

100% is a really important number at River Academy.

We expect every student to engage fully with what is happening in the classroom; we do not allow individuals to fall behind. Therefore, when we give instructions, we expect you to do it and when we ask a question, we expect you to have a go.

We do not, however, expect you to be right every time. This is a huge part of learning – getting things wrong. This is absolutely fine and should be encouraged!

Learning is meant to be difficult

Let us be clear: we know that learning over time means overcoming difficult things. In fact, when we do this, our learning is more likely to stick, for longer.

Your teachers will support you every step of the way. This will include:

- Giving you retrieval exercises
- Getting you to practise and rehearse knowledge and skills over and over again
- Making links with your prior learning
- Modelling and scaffolding activities for you
- Making use of 'turn and talks' and discussions to explore new ideas and responses
- Asking you lots of questions

Our most important message to you is to **enjoy the difficult**. It is proof that you are learning!

Student Voice

We are a diverse school community and pride ourselves on being a safe, supportive and fun place to learn. We value your opinion and have set up a variety of ways for this to happen.

House Representatives

You have the opportunity to apply to become a House Representative for your year. If you are successful, you will be required to help at Parents' Evenings, Information Evenings, tour guests of the school, help organise teams for house events and even interview new teachers!

School Council

The School Council consists of two students per tutor group, nominated by your peers. If selected you will attend termly School Council meetings, where key topics will be discussed, and decisions made by you. For example, arrangements for break and the rewards system.

Sports Captains

These roles are student leadership opportunities for each year group to support the PE department with the running of extra-curricular clubs and fixtures. The department appoint one male and female student from each year group as Captains and they are supported by two Ambassadors per year.

Eco Warrior

One student in each house will represent their form to ensure that the students are able to be as sustainable as they can. This will include bringing forward ideas, working on campaigns and spreading awareness around the school site.





After School Clubs

Electives

On Wednesdays every student participates in a club. This takes place from 3.40 to 4.30pm and will include a vast range of activities.



A flavour of the Electives:

- Sports Clubs
- Art Club
- Debate Group
- Board Games Club
- Choir
- Chess Club
- Rowing Club
- Japanese and Korean Club
- Gardening Group
- Mock Trial

You will choose an Elective for the Autumn Term. Each term you will begin a new Elective Club.

There will also be sports practices and other clubs across the week. Watch the noticeboards and student bulletin for details of what is happening and when. Clubs finish at around 4.40pm.

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 your 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 absolute best pieces of work, both in terms of effort, accomplishment, and ingenuity.

