



# Balcarras

From strength to strength

YEAR 9  
SUBJECT INFORMATION  
FOR PARENTS

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2020 - 2021





Dear Parents

This booklet is a guide to the courses your child is following in Year 9. I hope you will find it useful. If it does not answer all of your questions please contact the head of department concerned and they will be happy to provide any further information you need.

As in Year 8, most of our work in Year 9 is carried out in groups setted by ability, this means the pupils are able to advance at a similar pace. The exceptions are art, drama, music and computing, where mixed ability groups continue to be used.

Later this year we will involve you in the process that leads to the choice of optional courses in Years 10 and 11. Please take note of two important dates:

- Tuesday 2nd February 2021 - 7-8pm  
Options Meeting for Year 9 Parents
- Thursday 25th February 2021 - 4-7pm  
Year 9 Parents' Evening

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Elizabeth Cullis". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Mrs Elizabeth Cullis  
Assistant Headteacher  
October 2020

## **Art**

### **Work in the studio**

Year 9 marks the completion of the Key Stage 3 course. Pupils will have gained a broad knowledge and understanding of different art styles, movements and cultures. Although work will continue to be teacher led, pupils will be increasingly encouraged to develop more individual approaches to their assignments. Pupils will be asked to draw on previous skills acquired throughout this valuable key stage. A typical project would be one where pupils research into how different artists and cultures have used the portrait in their differing art works. From this research pupils will be encouraged to discuss their findings, and produce their own re-interpretation of their discoveries.

### **Resources used**

These are wide-ranging and can include drawing, painting, collage, print-making and clay work. Stimuli for lessons include objects, books, reproductions and demonstrations. ICT and internet research will also be widely used.

### **How parents are able to help**

It is important that pupils choosing art as a GCSE option have developed effective habits of homework. Parents can play a valuable part by encouraging observational studies based on objects inside and outside the home. Any stimuli that enhances an awareness of art history is to be encouraged, such as books, visits to museums, galleries and ICT research.

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**Head of Department: Mr D Hazael**

## **Computing**

### **Work in the Classroom**

In Year 9, pupils have one computing lesson every two weeks. Pupils further develop their skills in both programming and graphic design. The curriculum is designed to help pupils make an informed decision, especially as they will have two GCSE options in computing of GCSE computer science and GCSE creative media.

### **Curriculum**

- Algorithms and programming
- Coding project using Python
- Graphic design principles
- Graphics project using Photoshop
- Networks and HTML
- Web design project

### **Resources**

All resources for lessons are available on the VLE and are accessible to both pupils and parents. These include lesson worksheets, homework activities and skills videos. For theory topics, each pupil will have an online booklet to complete which they will also use for homework tasks. Projects will be worked on in class, pupils are not expected to buy the software used. They can however, request to use the computer rooms during lunch if required.

### **Assessment**

Throughout the year there will be a number of VLE assessments and each unit will have a final assessment which will be graded on a 9-1 scale.

### **How parents are able to help**

Showing an interest in the topic is always a big help, as well as ensuring their homework is completed to the highest effort standard. If lessons are missed, the VLE can be used to catch up with content. Pupils can access BBC Bitesize to consolidate their knowledge and download Python free to practice at home.

***Head of Department: Miss A Hinton***

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## **Design and Technology**

### **Work in the classroom**

In Year 9, pupils are expected to become increasingly autonomous in their work as they progress through the key stage.

Pupils will continue to develop the skills, knowledge and techniques explored in Years 7 and 8.

### **Resources used**

Pupils will be required to wear a protective apron during practical lessons to comply with health and safety regulations. These will be provided by the department.

Pupils will be expected to undertake written work using a variety of media, including A4 and A3 paper and project booklets. There is a growing emphasis on the use of ICT for design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). The department uses a wide range of text books and online resources to support learning, both in and out of the classroom.

### **How parents are able to help**

Parents can support learning by showing an interest in the work their children undertake in the classroom, and by discussing homework tasks which are used to reinforce and develop this learning. It is recommended that the VLE is monitored on a regular basis.

In food and nutrition, it would be helpful for parents to carefully check ingredient lists to ensure the correct resources are available for practical activities. Parents are expected to provide ingredients for practical work. If there is a financial problem with this, then please contact us to see if we can help. In food lessons, pupils will continue to learn and develop food preparations skills. They will do this by completing practical work through lessons on multi-cultural and protein foods, as well as completing a design based task.

In product design and textiles, pupils should be encouraged to consider the familiar products we use every day in a more critical way. Pupils could start to develop design skills by using ICT programs such as Sketch Up or Tinkercad. These are both free computer aided design programs that pupils can use at home to develop their design skill.

There is some technical vocabulary in this subject, and pupils need to practise so that they can use it correctly and with confidence.

***Head of Department: Mrs J C Swanepoel***

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## **Drama**

Year 9 develops earlier work in Years 7 and 8 continuing to build confidence, team work and presentational skills for life. We also explore wider dimensions building a basic understanding of more technical dimensions of theatre, film and television - how drama effects can influence how we represent and perceive life on stage and through the media.

The Year 9 course also serves as an introduction and bridge to our Key Stage 4 course. The syllabus will involve some extended project work culminating in the summer term. This takes place across approximately 5 hours of lesson time. Activities include improvisation and script work. Individuals are assessed in a group context with credit given for commitment and generosity of spirit as well as technical proficiency.

In addition to giving some end of key stage recognition for the achievements of pupils, this experience also prepares people for the demands of drama at a higher level should they decide to opt for this subject.

[Please note that some work may involve video recording – as do the GCSE and A level courses in this subject. If this is not acceptable then parents should contact the Drama Department to 'opt out' of this element.]

### **How parents are able to help**

The Year 9 drama course does not normally involve homework, however, there can be great benefit if parents show an interest in activities and encourage discussion at home. Indeed, students may decide to do some extra work beyond school - learning lines, rehearsing or researching topics. This will be voluntary but should be encouraged so long as it doesn't interfere with other compulsory study.

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**Head of Department: Mr A Bennett**

## **English**

### **Work in the classroom**

Pupils in Year 9 continue to develop the skills inherent in reading, writing, speaking and listening. They will work individually, as one of a pair, and as part of a group, with work taking place in the library and the computer room, where possible, as well as in the classroom.

### **Resources**

Pupils' work is based on novels, poems, plays and non-fiction texts, with the assignments and activities being developed within the department. As in Years 7 & 8, every pupil has an English book in which she/he will complete work in lessons, homework and end of unit assessments. Students are expected to maintain this to a high standard.

### **Curriculum**

Students in Y9 will study the following units of work:-

- Dystopian Fiction (Reading & Writing)
- Blood Brothers (Modern drama)
- Romeo & Juliet (Shakespeare)
- Of Mice and Men (Novell)
- Power & Conflict Poetry (GCSE)
- Spoken Language (GCSE)
- Creative Writing Competition

### **Assessment**

Students' work will be marked in a variety of ways including the highlighting of both achievements and errors, focused and summative written comments, specific targets, verbal feedback and progress set against assessment criteria. Students will be guided and encouraged to review their own work so that they have a clear idea of how to improve.

### **How parents are able to help**

Parents are asked to continue to show an interest in their child's homework and to discuss the work while it is in progress. This extends the audience beyond the teacher and fellow pupils and helps to give the work a genuine sense of value. Parents can help their children to learn corrected spellings and punctuation and to review any individual targets that have been set.

***Head of Department: Mr D Sharkey***

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## **Geography**

### **Work in and outside the classroom**

Students will study a range of topics designed to enable them to meet the criteria of the new National Curriculum programme of study for KS3. The topics studied will give students a more detailed insight into physical processes and human activity, the interaction between them and the environmental impacts of them both. Topics to be studied include: ecosystems, glaciation, tourism and population pressure.

Assessment in geography takes many forms with students being supported in learning how to use self-reflection, peer assessment, group analysis, and target setting. These methods are used in addition to teacher assessment and students are encouraged to celebrate their success and set targets for improvement. Independent learning is a key priority and all students will be encouraged to develop these key skills through geography.

During the year there will be an optional trip which will compliment the ecosystems topic.

### **Resources used**

A variety of resources are used to compliment the delivery of lessons throughout the topics. A combination of text and ICT resources are well integrated in to the schemes of work to ensure pupils are exposed to a wide range of academic materials. Pupils will use these resources to learn through a wide range of methods including pair and group work, role play, internet research and interactive games/activities.

### **How parents can help**

Homework is set regularly in order to consolidate learning compliment and extend work completed in the classroom. Students should be encouraged to use reference materials such as an atlas, the internet, textbooks, magazines and newspapers alongside a dictionary when doing their homework in order to raise general awareness of continents, countries and cities, and improve overall literacy skills. Parents could encourage students to watch television programmes such as the news, Countryfile and other relevant documentaries to improve their knowledge of current affairs and events. Going for walks using an OS map also consolidates students' map skills. Wider reading of both non-fiction and fiction books that link to relevant topics is also encouraged.

Sharing holiday experiences and asking questions about places parents and friends have visited would broaden horizons and help students to grasp more difficult concepts such as different levels of development and the implications these have on everyday life in other countries.

**Head of Department : Mrs E Cullis**

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## **History**

### **Learning in the classroom**

The entire year is taken up with study of the 20<sup>th</sup> century world. This is international history, though it often connects closely with pupils' own lives and the experiences of their families. For example, pupils may frequently incorporate family anecdotes and recollections of the two World Wars into their work.

This unit provides an understanding of the modern world, including empire , politics, civil rights issues , terrorism and war, which helps them to grow into well-informed citizens and also builds a solid knowledge of 20<sup>th</sup> century history in preparation for GCSE.

As in Year 8, some important individual events are studied in depth through a varied programme of teaching and learning. We focus on key questions from the period which are investigated through individual assignments or whole class enquiries.

### **Resources used**

A wide range of class textbooks and library books are used, supplemented with film, audio sources and clips. As well as this primary sources assume a growing importance during this final stage of Key Stage 3 and much of this is accessed via online archives. Students are encouraged to be much more independent and adventurous in their methods of research in order to actively prepare them for the challenges of GCSE history. Students have the opportunity to go on a trip in February half term as well as being given first preference to the varying activities during History Week in November.

### **How parents are able to help**

It is very beneficial if pupils of this age are encouraged to become interested in news and documentary programmes on radio and television, as is having the opportunity to read a daily newspaper. There are also now a huge variety of podcasts, YouTube films and apps for students to use to engage in history outside of the classroom. Parents can also help by encouraging students to read as it develops their literacy skills and enables them to access more challenging material.

***Head of Department: Mr M Stoker***

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## **Mathematics**

### **Work in the classroom**

Much of the work in Year 9 is focused upon preparing pupils for the end of key stage assessments which they sit in the summer term. Topics covered in Years 7 and 8 such as 'number', 'algebra', 'ratio, proportion and rates of change', 'geometry and measures', 'probability' and 'statistics', are developed and longer, more complex assignments and investigations are carried out. Skills involving mental arithmetic will be regularly practised.

### **Resources used**

The main course material is from the CGP texts and this offers a range of approaches designed to meet the needs of pupils at all levels of ability. A selection of other resources, including worksheets, are also used, particularly when pupils are carrying out investigations.

The assessments that we currently use target different ability levels within the National Curriculum. Students develop an increased awareness of the level at which they are working.

### **How parents are able to help**

It is valuable for pupils to be able to talk over their work and share the challenge of new topics and the search for appropriate solutions. There will be some homework assignments which explicitly ask pupils *not* to use a calculator. When this is the case parents should encourage pupils to estimate their answers before trying to find the solution. Pupils will need particular help and encouragement when they are revising for the examinations in May. The week by week framework for mathematics can be viewed on the school's VLE (accessed via the school website).

Additional help on any mathematics topic can be found by going to [www.vle.mathswatch.com](http://www.vle.mathswatch.com). Individual logins and passwords are given out at the start of the year. Here, you access video clips and other resources to support you from the lowest levels at KS3 up to the top grade at GCSE.

***Head of Department: Mr S Critchley***

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## **Modern Foreign Languages**

In Year 9 the vast majority of pupils continue learning both of their foreign languages.

### **Work in the classroom**

We aim to teach languages in a way which is thoroughly practical. The courses emphasise situations which pupils could meet in their normal lives and set out to equip them with the words and phrases which they need. There is also a focus on grammar in order to prepare pupils for GCSE.

The teacher will often speak to the pupils in French, Russian or Spanish and they are encouraged to use the foreign language as the normal language of the classroom.

### **Resources used**

Each course is based on a textbook which is accompanied by listening resources. These provide an outline of the course which individual teachers will supplement with exercises and activities of their own. These include resources created for the interactive whiteboard as well as a range of language learning websites.

### **How parents are able to help**

Progress depends upon a good stock of relevant words and phrases and homework tasks often involve learning new vocabulary or practising it in a dialogue. Parents can play a valuable part by checking that a list of words or a dialogue has been thoroughly learned. Written homework is also set and it is helpful if parents can check that this has been completed. We expect all pupils to have access to either a bilingual pocket dictionary or the website [www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com) at home. Holidays and school trips to the countries where these languages are spoken are also highly motivating!

We run a **Latin Club** at lunchtimes and sometimes we also run a **Japanese Club**, depending on staff availability. All of these clubs are open to pupils in Year 9 and they are very popular. They are a lot of fun and present a marvellous opportunity for our pupils to diversify in their language learning experience. We also run GCSE Italian after school, which is a 2 year course and takes place from 3.45 until 5.00pm every Tuesday. This is open to pupils in Year 9, so long as they are able to join the course at the beginning of September. Otherwise, they will have to wait until Year 10 to join, should they wish to complete the GCSE.

**Head of Department: Mrs J Hockenhill**

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## **Music**

### **Work in the classroom**

In Year 9 students continue to explore music through performing, listening and composing. Frequent links are made to GCSE Music so students can make an informed choice as to whether or not GCSE Music is an option for them. Students develop musical skills through a wide variety of topics, including GCSE Taster, Theme and Variations, Live Lounge, Ensemble Composition, Dance Music and Film Music. Students are expected to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired throughout Key Stage 3 to complete tasks in a responsible and independent way.

The department's two classrooms, along with practise rooms, allow students to develop individual strengths and interests in preparation for their final Key Stage 3 assessments and equip them with the skills and knowledge to move onto GCSE Music.

Due to the practical nature of the subject, students are constantly receiving verbal feedback. Opportunities are also created for peer, self and teacher evaluation. Work is formally assessed at the end of each topic, often through performing work that has been composed.

### **Resources used**

Students record key words and facts as well as completing written evaluations about their work. Visual and aural stimuli such as videos, posters, recordings and live performances are used to develop appreciation and understanding of the work covered. Specific music software, Mixcraft and Sibelius, are used as composition and performance tools, along with tuned and untuned percussion, electronic keyboards and voices. Students who learn instruments are encouraged to use them in class when this is appropriate.

### **How parents are able to help**

Listening to music and encouraging discussion will help students develop awareness of the basic elements. On occasions, students are directed to extra resources on the school's R:drive or VLE to extend their in class learning. Students are encouraged to participate in any of the extra-curricular activities.

***Head of Department: Mrs H Chong***

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## **Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)**

PSHE education is the school subject through which children and young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives, now and in the future. PSHE education develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society. **The Department for Education (DFE)** research report states that: *'A high quality PSHE provision has a significant effect on pupils' academic success, makes them more engaged in school and has an overall effect on their well-being'*.

### How we deliver PSHE at Balcarras?

Every week, a tutor session is set aside for each tutor group to explore aspects of PSHE education. In addition, the timetable is suspended for two hours each half term. During these sessions we often invite visitors in to discuss issues with students so that they have a fresh perspective on some of the topics being studied.

This year students will study the following topics:

- *Making decisions*
- *Careers and how do I decide my Options?*
- *Alcohol*
- *Relationships*
- *Sex education and contraception*
- *Nutrition*
- *Positive self-esteem and stress management*
- *Discrimination*
- *Body Image*
- *Mental Health*
- *Dealing with change*
- *The Sleep Factor*
- *Problem Solving*

**Head of PSHE and Citizenship: Miss H Davies**

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## Physical Education

### Programme of work

Pupils should become more expert in their skills and techniques and learn how to apply them in different activities. They start to understand what makes an effective performance and how to apply these principles to their own and others' work. They learn to take the initiative and make decisions for themselves about what to do to improve performance. They start to identify the types of activities they prefer and take a variety of roles, such as leader or official.

The timetable consists of:

<b>Girls:</b>	<b>Boys:</b>
Hockey	Football
Netball	Basketball
Basketball	Rugby
Athletics	Athletics
Rounders	Cricket
Tennis	Tennis
Badminton	Badminton
Gymnastics	Gymnastics
Handball	Handball
Football	
Tag Rugby	

Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have an additional lesson which is used to teach elements of health, fitness and communication skills. Each pupil will study health and fitness, outdoor adventurous activities and athletics activities as part of a healthy living programme.

### How parents are able to help

Pupils should be encouraged to apply the lessons of this course in their everyday lives throughout the year. They should also be reminded of the importance of the extra-curricular programme and encouraged to attend the activities run by the department and the school sports development officer.

For pupils wishing to play sport at the highest level, the school has excellent links with outside clubs.

**Head of Department: Mr M Harvey**

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## **Religious Education**

The Religious Education Department at Balcarras aims to produce religiously educated and aware pupils who also value truth, seek justice and honour, respect themselves and others and who care about British values and the world they live in. Our aim is to educate pupils so that they are interested in and can understand the religious beliefs, values and traditions of others whilst also being willing to assess their own beliefs against conflicting opinion. As a result of this, religious education helps our pupils build their sense of identity and belonging and allows them to explore world issues in a secure background. Moral and spiritual growth is at the heart of our teaching and pupils are encouraged to show that they are learning from world religions not just learning about world religions.

Although religious education at Balcarras School explores aspects of Christianity and other core world religions including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhism, we do not presuppose individual commitment. Indeed, we seek to make the content accessible to all pupils whether they belong to a religious tradition or not. In addition, while we are fully conscious of an increasingly diverse and changing society, we are keen to highlight the important role of family and community in religious belief and activity. The work of the department is underpinned by the recently updated Gloucestershire agreed syllabus for key stage three and key stage four and five follow the OCR religious education examinations.

Parents are able to withdraw their sons and daughters from this personal development if they have strong religious or conscience grounds. These must, however, be discussed in detail with the Headteacher.

### **Work in the classroom**

Pupils in Year 9 start with the world religions of Islam and Judaism and progress onto the 'Comparative Religions, Philosophy and Ethics' topic. This allows them to consider the religious beliefs behind these religions and how they compare to their own. This year involves much cross-curricular work with pupils comparing these religions to work they are completing in other subjects, such as History and Science well as media portrayals. Year 9 requires pupils to work in GCSE mode, where they will be asked to consider their opinions on issues and ask fundamental questions. Pupils have found this aspect of the course to be stimulating and throughout the course their confidence at expressing themselves in both discussion and written work is noticeable.

During Year 9 pupils can opt to study GCSE - Religion, Philosophy and Ethics in Year 10 and 11. At GCSE we study the OCR Religious Education examination, which involves pupils learning Christian Theology, Philosophy and Ethics and Buddhist Philosophy. Studying Religion, Philosophy and Ethics GCSE is both challenging and rewarding. Pupils are required to use a range of thinking skills. Pupils are required to have opinions, be able to analyse and critique as well as consider why people hold certain points of view. This course is ideal for pupils who might be thinking of going on to do Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at A-level or want a means of challenging themselves and others about current moral issues.

***Head of Department: Mrs H Ebanja***

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## **Science**

**An important difference between science and other subjects is that all students start their GCSE science course at the beginning of Year 9.**

In Years 9, 10 and 11 students complete the AQA Combined science: Trilogy syllabus, worth two GCSE grades. These are examined by six papers in the summer of Year 11. There is no longer any coursework component. It is therefore crucial that work covered in Year 9 is retained for revision.

Over the course of Year 9, students will complete 6 topics: 2 each in biology, chemistry and physics. Each topic will contain 2 graded homeworks and an end of topic test. There will also be a GCSE style mock examination in May. The results of these assessments will be used for the setting process into Year 10.

In Year 9 students work will be graded to reflect the new GCSE: they will be graded from 1-9. Grade 9 is the equivalent of a high A\* in the old GCSE structure, grade 7 is the same as an A and grade 5 is comparable to a high C/low B. There are two tiers of entry for the GCSE course. Higher tier (grades 4 to 9) and Foundation tier (grades 1 to 5). A final decision on which tier a student is entered for is made in Year 11.

### **Resources**

The resources used in lessons can be found on the school VLE and R: drive. These include copies of the worksheets, PowerPoints and homeworks used for each topic. Students are also issued with a Year 9 revision guide.

### **How parents are able to help**

We issue front sheets for each topic. These show what a pupil will be learning in each unit and parents can use them to help their children revise for end of unit tests and for the mock examination in May. Science homework is posted on the VLE. Other websites suitable for revision are as follows:

<https://www.bbc.com/education/examspecs/z8r997h>

<http://freesciencelessons.co.uk/>

<https://www.s-cool.co.uk/gcse>

<https://app.senecalearning.com>

The GCSE specification we follow can be found at the website below:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/gcse/combined-science-trilogy-8464>

**Head of Department: Dr S Jones**

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## **VLE: Virtual Learning Environment**

The VLE is an online extension of the classroom, which can be accessed by students, parents and staff, and aims to share information and resources in a simple, clear and intuitive way. Any device which has internet access can view the site at the following address: **balcarras.fireflycloud.net**

The system, called Firefly, allows the opportunity for personalised learning for students and the ability for them to become increasingly independent and responsible for their learning and self-organisation. It also enables parents and guardians to support them at home, by viewing their homework, resources, attendance and potentially see their progression through the school. This has been redesigned over the last year to be simple and easy to navigate. To log on, new parents should visit the site address, and activate their account, using the email address the school holds on record as part of your contact information. Current parents should have their children added to their account already.

In September, every new student will be allocated a username and password to access this site and this is their normal student network login. When logging in from outside of school, students must include the last part of their email address that follows their username (#####@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk).

There are also mobile apps available for both parents and students, which can be downloaded from the appropriate app store. These are called Firefly for Parents and Firefly for Students, and are free. When logging in for the first time, the same username and password must be used and the school code: **balcarras**, to link successfully with our system.

## **School Network**

Students can access the school network shared area (known as the **R: drive**) and download electronic resources provided by their teachers. They can also access their personal network area (known as the **H: drive**). This is available by either clicking on the Network link at the top of the school website homepage (**www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk**) or by selecting the Network option located on the dashboard of the VLE (**balcarras.fireflycloud.net**). Users will be directed to the FoldR website and students need to use their school username and password to log in. FoldR (By Minnow IT) is also available as an app for Android and iOS devices. FoldR can also be used to changes pupil passwords when away from school.

## **Notes**

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