

Magic Arc School

Bradbury House, View Road, Cliffe Woods, Kent ME3 8UJ

Inspection dates

27–29 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor, board of trustees and senior leadership team have not ensured that all the independent standards are met.
- Wide variations in the quality of teaching have caused significant inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' learning.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are not sufficiently high.
- Pupils make insufficient progress in English, mathematics and in other subjects.
- The absence of a cohesive, consistent curriculum framework has contributed to weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The lack of a reliable procedure for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress hampers teaching.
- Safeguarding arrangements are not effective. The board of trustees and senior leaders do not give pupils' safety a sufficiently high priority.
- Weaknesses in the curriculum and in teaching mean that pupils' learning is restricted to a narrow range of subjects. As a result, pupils are not adequately prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders and trustees are unclear about priorities for improvements in the school. They have not developed a suitable plan to support the school's development.
- Leaders do not use training well enough to support improvements in teaching.
- The trustees and senior leaders have not established a whole-school understanding of the school's aims, or a shared vision for the school's future.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Caring, friendly relationships ensure that pupils feel secure.
- Parents are positive about the school's work.
- All members of the staff team are keen to play their part in the school's development.
- A small proportion of pupils are learning well in English and mathematics.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review all aspects of safeguarding and make the necessary improvements to safeguarding procedures as a matter of urgency. In particular, make sure that:
 - the board of trustees and senior leaders give pupils' safety and welfare an appropriately high priority
 - everyone in the school is clear about safeguarding procedures and about their responsibilities for pupils' safety
 - recruitment procedures are carried out in line with the latest statutory guidance
 - fire safety regulations comply with statutory regulations and that all members of staff are clear about their responsibilities in ensuring pupils' safety.
- Rapidly improve leadership, by ensuring that:
 - leaders have developed a clear plan of action for improvements in the school's work
 - all members of staff are clear about priorities for development and understand their roles in securing improvements
 - leaders follow school policies consistently
 - the complaints procedure complies with statutory requirements
 - the board of trustees understands and fulfils its responsibilities for holding school leaders to account for pupils' education, health, welfare and safety
 - suitable systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are established
 - reliable procedures for assessing pupils' learning and progress are in place.
- Improve teaching, so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - establishing a cohesive whole-school curriculum plan
 - securing consistently high expectations of pupils' learning
 - ensuring that teachers have access to accurate assessment information about pupils' progress and use this effectively to plan learning
 - making better use of training to support developments in teaching and to ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor, board of trustees and senior leadership team have failed to create a culture of sufficiently high expectations for pupils' learning. Staff and teachers have lost confidence in the school's proprietor and in its senior leaders.
- Leaders and trustees have failed to establish a whole-school curriculum that equips pupils sufficiently for their future lives. The lack of a cohesive curriculum means that pupils' learning is limited to a narrow range of subjects. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- The proprietor, senior leaders and trustees made sure that policies and procedures met the statutory requirements necessary for the school's registration earlier this year. However, since then, they have disregarded the need to ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders and trustees have not ensured that the school's complaints policy complies with the independent school standards. In particular, the policy does not make suitable provision for a hearing before a panel in cases where a parent or carers is not satisfied with the initial response to their complaint.
- Senior leaders have not developed reliable procedures for assessing and checking pupils' progress. They do not monitor how much progress pupils make and do not hold teachers to account sufficiently for pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders are not clear about priorities for improvement in the school. They have not developed a suitable plan to support developments. As a result, members of staff are unclear about their roles and responsibilities.
- The board of trustees and senior leadership team have not established suitable procedures for checking on and improving teaching. They have not used training well enough to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Adults work hard to support pupils' learning and well-being. However, their attempts have been hampered for some time by weak leadership and a lack of direction.
- Members of staff have established consistent daily routines. As a result, the school functions smoothly and pupils feel comfortable.
- Weaknesses in leadership have resulted in low staff morale in the past few months. However, all members of staff are keen to play their part in the school's development. They support each other well and staff morale is beginning to improve.

Governance

- The proprietor does not provide sufficient challenge for leaders. The proprietor does not hold the leadership team to account sufficiently for pupils' safety, education and well-being. As a result, the independent school standards are not met, safeguarding arrangements are ineffective and the quality of teaching and learning is weak.
- The board of trustees has not met this term to consider the school's work specifically. The acting chief executive officer's most recent report to the board of trustees' annual general

meeting does not give sufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders and trustees do not pay enough attention to pupils' safety and welfare. They have not ensured that all required health and safety policies are complete and implemented consistently. The school does not ensure that parents have access to an up-to-date safeguarding policy.
- Leaders and trustees have recently drafted a range of policies that meet the most recent government guidance, including a safeguarding policy and a health and safety policy. However, leaders and trustees have not ensured that the policy is understood and implemented by all members of staff. They have not made sufficient arrangements to ensure that policies are available to parents.
- The proprietor has not ensured compliance with fire safety regulations. For example, fire evacuation drills have not been completed since the school's registration in February 2018 and fire extinguishers have not been checked and serviced regularly enough. A number of recently installed fire exit signs were missing at the time of the inspection. Disorganised and incomplete fire safety documentation makes it difficult for leaders and staff to access key documents. Omissions in fire safety procedures put pupils and staff at risk should a fire occur.
- Recruitment and suitability checks have not been completed fully. Staff references are not always taken up and checks necessary to ensure that trustees are suitable to perform school leadership responsibilities have not been completed.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have adequate access to cold drinking water. However, cold water supplies are not labelled consistently enough to ensure that pupils are clear about which taps they should and should not use for drinking water.
- All members of staff, including the designated safeguarding leads, have completed appropriate safeguarding training, including in the 'Prevent' duty. However, fire safety training has not been prioritised sufficiently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Wide variations in the quality of teaching hamper pupils' progress in English, mathematics and other subjects. Teaching does not build securely enough on pupils' starting points.
- The absence of a cohesive whole-school curriculum plan means that the content and quality of pupils' learning rely too heavily on individual teachers' subject knowledge and expertise, which are variable. The teaching of subjects such as geography and religious education is too haphazard to ensure that pupils learn well enough in a range of subjects.
- The school lacks reliable and systematic procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are unclear about how well pupils are learning over time and are too slow to respond to pupils' individual needs, including for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are not consistently high enough. Teaching

does not always encourage pupils to complete work of the best quality possible.

- Inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics mean that pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing fundamental reading skills.
- An element of stronger teaching ensures that some pupils make better progress than others in English and mathematics.
- Senior teachers recognise the need to improve the quality of teaching as a matter of urgency. They recognise that all members of staff are keen to improve their practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Some aspects of the independent school standards regarding the school's premises and accommodation are not met. Current arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety in the case of a fire are inadequate.
- The absence of a planned curriculum means that pupils do not develop a sufficient understanding of British values, such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Adults and pupils get on well together. Pupils respect their teachers and work hard.
- All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire feel that their children are happy and safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They behave well in lessons and when moving around the school.
- Strong relationships support pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils trust adults to look after them well.
- The school has secured notable successes in pupils' attendance, often re-engaging pupils after lengthy absences from schooling.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies do not meet statutory requirements and are not fit for purpose.
- Leaders have not established an effective system for recording and monitoring incidents of misbehaviour and bullying. However, discussions with leaders and responses by parents and staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire suggest that incidents of bullying are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Inadequacies in teaching limit pupils' progress across the curriculum. Pupils do not make enough progress in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Owing to erratic attendance and lengthy absences from education in the past, pupils often have significant gaps in their learning when they join the school. Weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils do not make the rapid progress needed to make up for lost time in learning.
- Low expectations and weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge exacerbate pupils' misconceptions, which are not picked up and addressed quickly enough. Pupils who are confused about aspects of their learning are not given the support needed to improve their understanding in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils' progress over time is limited.
- The absence of a planned curriculum means that pupils do not learn a sufficiently broad range of subjects. All study English and mathematics. However, learning in other subjects, such as geography and religious education, is patchy. As a result, some pupils are less well prepared for life in modern Britain than others.
- Pupils learn a number of practical skills, including cookery, which contribute well to their growing independence. For example, during the inspection, pupils worked carefully and sensibly while preparing a cottage pie.
- Some pupils make better progress than others, developing secure reading, writing and mathematical skills. They learn how to use a range of strategies successfully to tackle mathematical problems and write perceptively about books, plots and characters.
- The oldest pupils are increasingly well prepared with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to tackle qualifications, including functional skills qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	145231
DfE registration number	887/6011
Inspection number	10054087

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Magic (UK) Ltd
Chair	Paul Thomas
Headteacher	Jennifer Daly (Acting)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,448
Telephone number	01634 570706
Website	No website specific to school
Email address	office@medway-magic.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Magic Arc School is located in Cliffe Woods, a suburban area in Medway, Kent. The school's facilities include a number of classrooms, an art room, a cookery room, a refreshment area, a large multi-purpose hall and an outdoor area where pupils can play and relax.
- Magic Arc School provides education for boys and girls who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have additional learning and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils join the school at different times during the school year and at different ages. Their

length of stay in the school varies according to their individual needs.

- The school is registered to admit a maximum of 60 pupils, and 16 pupils are currently on roll.
- The school teaches the national curriculum in English and mathematics. The older pupils work towards nationally recognised qualifications, including functional skills qualifications and GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- The school opened in September 2018. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning during seven lessons. Three of the visits were completed jointly with the acting chief executive officer.
- The inspector toured the school and its classrooms at different points during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke with leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. She considered eight responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector met with the school's acting chief executive officer, the acting headteacher and with a trustee. She also met with other members of staff, including the two teachers in charge.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation regarding the quality of education, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector analysed a range of pupils' work and considered information provided by the school about pupils' achievement.
- The acting headteacher and acting chief executive officer work in the school on a voluntary basis. They were not in the school on the final day of the inspection.
- The chair of governors was not available during the inspection.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school’s aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(g) where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor—
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which—
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;

- 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- 5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010; and
- 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(a) a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour;
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].
- 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
- 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person’s identity;
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual (“MB”), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if–
 - 20(6)(a) MB–
 - 20(6)(a)(i) is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 20(6)(b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB–
 - 20(6)(b)(i) where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check;
 - 20(6)(b)(ii) checks confirming MB’s identity and MB’s right to work in the United Kingdom;
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007,

whether–

- 21(3)(a)(i) S’s identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff (“S”), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
- 28(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
- 28(1)(c) cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such;

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1)(a) the information specified in sub-paragraph (2) is provided to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector[14], the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate[15];
- 32(1)(b) the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate;
- 32(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school’s internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request;

- 32(3) The information specified in this sub-paragraph is–
- 32(3)(a) particulars of the school’s policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions;
- 32(3)(c) particulars of the policy referred to in paragraph 2;
- 32(3)(d) particulars of arrangements for meeting the standards contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 13;
- 32(3)(f) details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year;

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which–
 - 33(b) is made available to parents of pupils;
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
 - 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is–
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
 - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e); and
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and

- 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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