

School inspection report

15 to 17 October 2024

Brighton College

Eastern Road

Brighton

BN2 0AL

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have created an environment in which pupils enjoy learning, flourish academically and take advantage of the many opportunities available to them. In every area of school life, leaders have the skills and knowledge to ensure that the Standards are met.
2. Governors have a sharp focus on achieving the best educational experience for pupils. They know the school's strengths and areas for development. They monitor the school through receipt of regular reports, frequent visits, conversations with pupils and dialogue with leaders who invite challenge and welcome feedback. This leads to ongoing improvements. For example, additional sixth-form spaces and opportunities for creative and performing arts have recently been added. Both have had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.
3. The school's enriching curriculum and activities programme is a significant strength. Leaders have carefully designed it to excite and inspire pupils, generating intellectual curiosity, fostering individuality and developing social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Pupils of all ages substantially expand their knowledge and skills by combining academic excellence with pursuing interests in a large and diverse co-curricular programme, and being involved in a programme of service, volunteering and charity projects. Many pupils achieve success in national competitions such as sports and music events, essay prizes and computer game design. Pupils achieve very highly in public examinations.
4. The clear emphasis placed on the importance of service and focus on community activities and charity impacts highly effectively on pupils' development of a sense of responsibility towards others. This ranges from the annual, school-wide 'make a difference day' to the weekly afternoon of service that is part of the curriculum. The 'beyond Brighton' curriculum, which develops through the school, successfully prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. The 'mind the gap' aspect of this prepares sixth-form pupils for university by educating them on topics such as student finance and budgeting, as well as developing their cooking skills. Careers education is extensive from Year 9. However, the careers guidance provided to pupils in Years 7 and 8 is not as comprehensive as that provided to older pupils.
5. Leaders have devised a bespoke personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme that is highly successful in teaching the importance of valuing and treating all people as equals. The programme has many different components, such as the 'beyond Brighton' strand that is planned to meet the different needs of each specific year group, life skills and volunteering. These successfully promote pupils' self-knowledge and self-esteem and develop skills of empathy. Teachers' clear planning across a wide range of topics and effective questioning helps pupils develop the self-confidence not to worry what others think, but at the same time be thoroughly respectful. This helps to create a culture of kindness throughout the school and develops pupils who are confident, keen to support others and mutually respectful. This is a significant strength of the school.
6. Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and have a high awareness that safeguarding issues can happen in the school. Dedicated training programmes for governors, teachers and staff are effectively provided, including through rigorous induction training, and are supplemented by quizzes and ongoing support. Regular reviews by the vigilant safeguarding team and reports to governors ensure robust and thorough analysis of any patterns and trends in this area.

7. Leaders foster a welcoming and supportive boarding environment that gives pupils a clear sense of belonging. Highly effective care ensures that staff know their pupils and respond to their needs well. The wellbeing of pupils is further enhanced by the accessible and stimulating environment. Pupils' emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical development is nurtured highly effectively through the encouragement of creativity, kindness and academic challenge.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen the careers guidance provided to pupils in Years 7 and 8.

Material change request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include increasing its capacity from 1300 to 1600 and extending its age range to include pupils aged 19 years.
 - The school currently includes provision for pupils who will turn 19 years of age in the academic year. The existing provision is suitable to meet their educational and pastoral needs.
 - Leaders have drawn up and implemented suitable plans to accommodate up to an additional 300 pupils. A thorough risk assessment has carefully considered the impact of the increased numbers of pupils, including on boarding, safeguarding, fire safety, supervision procedures and medical, teaching and dining facilities. Suitable and sufficient toilet, changing and showering facilities are already in place.
 - Recent building work has expanded accommodation in areas such as the sixth form, performing arts and dining spaces so that they can meet the needs of the proposed maximum number of pupils. Other facilities, including social spaces, and the health and wellbeing hub, have also recently been expanded and are sufficient to cater for 1600 pupils. The safeguarding team has been expanded to ensure that they have sufficient capacity should the material change be approved.
 - Leaders have made suitable plans to increase the capacity for boarders when this becomes necessary. Plans to renovate buildings to provide increased boarding accommodation indicate the likelihood that the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools will continue to be met once the proposed material change takes place.
9. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders keep up to date with any changes to current statutory guidance or regulations, and discharge their responsibilities effectively and consistently. Clear policies and protocols, understood by staff and pupils, comply with relevant legislation and are reviewed robustly and regularly.
11. Governors maintain close and effective oversight of the school. They are assigned to various committees and work effectively to ensure the quality of all aspects of the school's provision. Governors set clear expectations and high standards for leaders and staff. Governors work diligently to ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure the Standards are met.
12. Leaders communicate clear and well-articulated aims and vision which focus on creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, and a school that values kindness and the uniqueness of the individual. Pupils wear a 'kindness' wristband that serves as a constant reminder of these expectations. Pupils thrive personally and academically in a community where individual identity is understood and valued. Leaders foster a culture where pupils and staff are encouraged to innovate and initiate change. This culture develops pupils who want to make a difference both in their community and in the wider world.
13. Leaders liaise and collaborate with external agencies, such as children's services, effectively. They work closely and maintain a positive relationship with children's services and other safeguarding partners, which ensures a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding day pupils and boarders.
14. Leaders' consideration of pupils' wellbeing is central to their planning and decision making, which are well informed by listening to pupils and having a clear understanding of their needs. Leaders identify areas for development and take actions designed to improve them. For instance, leaders have recently expanded the health and wellbeing centre and organised the construction of spaces where pupils can relax and unwind.
15. Leaders are adept at managing risk. Robust procedures are in place to identify potential risks and reduce or remove them. For example, when leaders identified an increase in vaping incidents, they responded by adapting the PSHE programme to educate pupils about the harmful effects of vaping earlier than had originally been planned. The comprehensive risk register considers changing current and potential contextual risks. Clear communication with staff ensures that the risks associated with trips and visits are considered effectively, with appropriate risk assessments put in place and reviewed regularly.
16. The school implements an appropriate accessibility plan and fulfils its responsibility under the Equality Act 2010. A recently constructed building was purposefully designed with diversity in mind, for example, by including wide access points. Reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
17. Leaders make all required information available to parents, much of which they provide through the school's website. Leaders communicate regularly with parents, including through parents' evenings, interim grades and formal written reports. This ensures that parents are well informed about their child's progress and achievements. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information relating to pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans whom they fund.

18. The clear and transparent complaints procedure is available to parents. It encourages parents to share concerns, which leaders then deal with promptly. A comprehensive log of all complaints and low-level issues is carefully maintained and regular detailed analysis of concerns is carried out to ensure that trends are identified.
19. The leadership of boarding is highly effective. The well-trained boarding staff look after their pupils with much care. The close relationship between boarding staff and pupils helps foster a culture of kindness, with the caring ethos of the school reflected in the way pupils interact with each other. All boarding accommodation is of a high standard and well maintained, ensuring boarders feel comfortable and safe, and that all the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS) are met.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have created an exciting and enriching curriculum which is systematically planned to provide pupils with appropriate challenge and opportunity to pursue their interests and develop very high levels of knowledge and skills across the subject range. The language curriculum is extensive and includes eight classical and modern foreign languages, from Greek and Latin, to Russian and Mandarin, taught from Year 7 onwards. The creative and aesthetic curriculum includes a wide variety of options, such as dance and photography. Pupils demonstrate music making to a very high standard, engage effectively in dance and drama performances and produce sophisticated artwork. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and choose from a wide range of subjects at GCSE and A level, as well as several BTECs. This allows pupils to follow an individual pathway that matches their aspirations and needs extremely well. Pupils thrive, make good and often rapid progress, and consistently achieve very high results at GCSE and A level. Consequently, pupils are afforded a wide choice of higher education opportunities, with many gaining places at establishments with the most demanding entrance requirements.
22. The curriculum and teaching are planned to enable pupils to expand and explore their intellectual curiosity. Every pupil in the sixth form follows the 'our human story' course, which explores current issues and cultural discussions. This programme develops key skills such as creating and analysing critical arguments based on evidence. The 'story of our land' course for the lower years provides firm foundations across the humanities, integrating geography, history, religion and philosophy. High-quality teaching helps pupils to write effectively and develop investigative skills, gradually becoming increasingly independent learners. Furthermore, the course has been intentionally designed to encourage discussion. This effectively promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are advanced.
23. Teachers' expertise in and enthusiasm for their subjects develops pupils' subject knowledge substantially. Teachers provide sophisticated explanations of subject content and provide clear and detailed responses to pupils' questions and ideas. As a result, pupils are fully engaged in class, contribute their ideas in front of their peers, and ask insightful and thoughtful questions. Teachers make highly effective use of class time and resources to develop pupils' learning and understanding. Pupils demonstrate the desire to do well, driven by a culture that promotes intellectual engagement and academic challenge.
24. An effective assessment framework ensures that pupils' progress is continually monitored and evaluated. Regular assessments inform curriculum design and generate targeted additional support for individual pupils when required. Leaders use their thorough assessment data and teachers' professional knowledge to set ambitious targets for pupils' achievement. Teachers adopt school-wide marking policies to provide constructive feedback. This ensures that pupils know the strengths of their work and helps them identify areas for improvement.
25. The rigorous procedures for assessing the performance of different groups within the pupil body mean that the learning needs of pupils who have SEND are identified at an early stage. The learning support team train staff effectively to enable them to provide pupils with highly effective support when needed. The emphasis on developing secure study skills and examination techniques ensures that pupils who have SEND make good progress, and perform highly in external examinations.

26. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported in and out of lessons when required. Regular assessments enable early identification of any language needs and the support required to meet these. As a result, pupils who speak EAL develop their English skills well.
27. A rich and extensive programme of recreational activities, integrated into the school day, encourages the effective development of a wide range of skills in pupils of all ages. These have a highly positive impact on pupils' development of physical skills and attitudes towards learning and achievement. Engagement in co-curricular activities helps pupils to develop their confidence, teamwork and communication skills. Pupils also develop skills in areas such as rhetoric, musicality and problem solving through engagement in clubs such as debating, chamber choir and scuba physics. Pupils' participation is actively monitored and balanced alongside academic commitments to ensure an appropriate amount of free time is available to support pupils' wellbeing.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 28. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. A diverse programme of trips and a comprehensive pastoral curriculum promote mutual trust and respect, with an emphasis on kindness that permeates all aspects of school life. Themed weeks, on topics such as neurodiversity, help raise pupils' awareness of such issues and their impact on people. Teachers and pupils listen attentively during discussions, and while challenges are encouraged, respectful affirmation of other views is considered essential.
30. Assemblies, academic lessons and co-curricular pursuits help to develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils explore various prayer traditions, reflect on unresolved discrimination and discuss with maturity the superficiality of chasing consumerism while searching for contentment. High-quality creative work often draws on an appreciation of the beauty of the natural world and other forms of aesthetic value. Irrespective of their own religious beliefs, pupils demonstrate reverence in chapel services. Leaders create opportunities for personal reflection in support of pupils' spiritual development.
31. Pupils benefit from specialist and knowledgeable teaching across an extensive sports programme. This enables pupils to develop a wide range of physical skills, be active and focus on their physical health and wellbeing. Pupils learn about the interconnected nature of physical and mental wellbeing. Teachers understand the pressures that pupils can exert on themselves and provide opportunities to learn relaxation strategies, such as attending yoga classes or going for wellbeing walks along the seafront. The physical education (PE) and games curriculum encourages pupils to enjoy exercise and, if they wish, strive to excel in their chosen sport. As a result, participation in sport is high, and many individuals and teams enjoy national success.
32. The bespoke PSHE programme revisits key themes in greater depth as pupils progress through the school. It covers an extensive range of topics, such as bullying and strategies to promote positive mental health. Tutor delivery is supplemented by guest speakers and drop-down days. Pupils learn about self-image and online reputation as part of the 'digital wellbeing' aspect of PSHE. 'Life skills' is integrated into the programme and by the sixth form, pupils are confident and knowledgeable in areas that range from financial management to nutrition. Teachers encourage discussion and enable pupils to ask searching questions in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. This helps pupils to be thoughtful and become more self-aware and reflective. Furthermore, the service aspect of PSHE fosters a desire to help others, resulting in pupils developing empathy. Leaders have created opportunities for pupils to be involved in the development of PSHE through 'respect ambassadors' who elicit pupils' views and help shape aspects, such as the introduction of a course on digital wellbeing. The well-designed programme meets the needs of pupils and contributes to the culture of kindness, generosity and inclusivity that is evident in pupil interactions, both in class and around school.
33. Relationships and sex education (RSE) meets government guidelines. The programme covers a wide range of topics in which pupils explore friendship and reconciliation, issues of identity and challenges that may affect people growing up in modern society. Parents are consulted and material is shared with them to support learning. External providers teach some content, with subject specialists and teachers also facilitating progress. Individuals receive specialist training to support pupils in particular circumstances, such as gender questioning. Pupils demonstrate understanding of

RSE content and talk clearly about a range of topics such as healthy relationships and the meaning of informed consent.

34. The school's behaviour policy and associated sanctions are understood by all and applied consistently. Leaders effectively encourage pupils to behave positively at all times, noticing and praising them when they are supportive and kind. For example, random acts of kindness are rewarded and celebrated in assembly. This helps pupils to feel respected. Weekly pastoral meetings ensure that teachers are kept informed of pupils' sensitivities and needs, and receive support when needed. Leaders use the educational experience to engender and underpin a culture of kindness. They model the celebration of diversity, use affirmative language in discussions and respond to others empathetically. These behaviours are then replicated by the pupils. Consequently, pupils are considerate and polite in their day-to-day interactions with other people, and their behaviour is exemplary.
35. Leaders ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is in place. This includes monitoring detailed logs, providing regular training for staff and counselling for pupils. There is a sustained zero-tolerance approach to bullying. Leaders respond swiftly to the rare incidents of bullying that do occur and support both victims and perpetrators effectively.
36. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility. Pupils speak clearly about the personal development this brings them, and the increased self-awareness and confidence. Leaders ensure that pupil leaders such as prefects or mentors are suitably trained. Pupil leaders take their responsibilities seriously, supporting their peers and serving as role models for other pupils in terms of conduct and kindness.
37. Appropriate supervision through the deployment of suitably qualified staff helps to ensure that pupils move between classes and during breaktimes in an orderly and purposeful manner. Boarders are made aware of the expectations for town leave, including of their behaviour and the time that they are expected to return to the school.
38. The school maintains admission and attendance registers in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders keep track of attendance patterns and follow up any absenteeism promptly. Local authorities are informed whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.
39. Health and safety protocols and procedures are robust and implemented effectively. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk of fire, and regular fire evacuation drills are carried out. Access to the site is controlled by a security team at each entrance. Leaders' effective use of space ensures that facilities for learning, health, relaxation and boarding are of a high quality and meet the needs of pupils. The medical centre is staffed day and night by a caring and appropriately trained medical team.
40. Boarding pupils are provided with high-quality accommodation, with the freedom to personalise their spaces and securely lock away their valuables. House staff know pupils well. They deliver an effective induction programme which helps develop the confidence of boarders and ensures that they settle quickly into the routines of school. Leaders ensure that the physical needs of boarders are met by providing opportunities for exercise, socialising and relaxation, as well as a wide selection of high-quality food.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

42. The economic competence of pupils is promoted through the curriculum, including through the 'Beyond Brighton' programme. Pupils learn about a range of economic themes, such as budgeting and managing finances, using bank accounts, how investments and interest work, and the importance of financial planning.
43. The promotion of British values is embedded in the school culture. The school-wide teaching of active allyship and that no one is worth more or less than another is underlined by the attitudes and actions of the community. Pupils are tolerant and show respect for a diverse range of people, mindful not to be bystanders. They are taught about respect for democratic processes and the rule of law as part of the curriculum and in assemblies. For example, the 'story of our land' develops pupils' learning about the rule of law throughout British history. Aspects are further developed in themed weeks, such as 'anti-racism week' and 'law week'. These contain a mixture of lectures, debates and discussions, which increase pupils' knowledge and understanding as well as helping foster mutual respect. Democratic processes are actively applied when pupils vote for prefects, conduct debates modelled on British parliamentary debate, and participate in Model United Nations conferences.
44. The school develops pupils' understanding and appreciation of diversity in many ways, for example, by providing a float for pupils to participate in 'Brighton pride'. The principles of equality and diversity are embedded in the academic and wider curriculum. Pupils learn about the harm that prejudice and discrimination can do in PSHE, and actively challenge bias and stereotyping. Furthermore, the wide range of languages studied helps pupils' understanding of other cultures. A cultural calendar ensures that pupils actively explore and support different cultures within the school community. Initiatives such as 'respect ambassadors' and various clubs such as the Afro-Caribbean club and the 'rainbow alliance', help further promote respect and diversity throughout the school.
45. Careers education is taught through tutor time and complimented by several 'futures-focused' events that successfully support pupils towards choosing their future path. Pupils from Year 9 actively engage with the 'global futures' programme. This programme includes advice on making applications and interview techniques as well as undertaking work experience. It is designed to broaden pupils' horizons and help them make informed decisions at appropriate junctures, such as when choosing subject options and in life beyond school. However, the careers guidance for pupils in Years 7 and 8 is not as comprehensive as that provided to older pupils.
46. Teachers stimulate pupils' social and political understanding through assemblies and lessons that focus on citizenship. Pupils engage with themes such as the situation in particular parts of the world and the impact of extremism and populism. Co-curricular activities further inform pupils' social awareness, for example, by exploring and analysing viewpoints held in the local and wider community as part of outreach journalism activities.
47. As part of the curriculum all pupils engage in voluntary activity. The work is diverse and includes teaching Latin to younger children through the 'pelican primary' programme and giving drama presentations to care home residents. Pupils also contribute to the annual 'make a difference day'

involving community projects. Such engagement develops pupils' sense of responsibility towards others well.

48. A culture of kindness is evident in day and boarding pupils. Because of the nature of boarding, pupils are aware of how their actions can affect the house community. This is extended to all members of the school where pupils actively accept responsibility for their actions and develop an age-appropriate sense of their own agency.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and in accordance with current statutory guidance. Governors provide diligent and effective oversight of safeguarding, with a dedicated member of the board leading on such issues. A culture of transparency seen through frequent communication with members of the safeguarding team enables governors to have an accurate understanding of issues, monitor any trends and analyse actions.
51. The training of staff is comprehensive. This includes thorough induction training and ongoing support. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues and take appropriate action when any potential concerns are identified. They respond appropriately to any concerns about child-on-child abuse and understand the risks associated with extremism. Individuals receive specialist training to support pupils with specific needs, for example, bereavement and gender questioning.
52. Pupils are clear on how to access support should they need to. A wide range of staff are available for them to speak to, including counsellors and mental health first aiders. There is an independent person available to boarders. As a result, pupils feel well supported and safe in school.
53. Leaders work collaboratively and promptly with relevant external agencies, such as children's services and the police. They have cultivated a positive relationship with local safeguarding partners, working together to handle concerns. A positive culture of referrals exists throughout the school including for low-level concerns. Staff record and report any issues without delay and leaders respond promptly and effectively. Meticulous record keeping, ongoing communication with pastoral teams and high levels of vigilance help safeguard pupils effectively.
54. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place. The proactive safeguarding team regularly monitors these systems. Swift and appropriate action is taken in the event of any inappropriate use. A particular focus has been placed on educating pupils about online safety through a programme of digital wellbeing.
55. Leaders conduct suitable recruitment checks on governors, staff, volunteers and contractors before they begin work. A suitable single central record of appointments is accurately maintained and regularly monitored.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 56. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Brighton College
Department for Education number	846/6008
Registered charity number	307061
Address	Brighton College Eastern Road Brighton East Sussex BN2 0AL
Phone number	01273 704200
Email address	reception@brightoncollege.net
Website	www.brightoncollege.org.uk
Proprietor	The Board of Governors of Brighton College
Chair	The Rt. Hon. Lord Maude of Horsham
Principal	Mr Richard Cairns
Head Master	Mr Steve Marshall-Taylor
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	1290
Number of boarding pupils	478
Date of previous inspection	16 to 19 November 2021

Information about the school

57. Brighton College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in Brighton. It is a registered charity, owned and governed by its board of governors who are trustees of the charity. The same body of governors also oversees the related preparatory school, which was inspected separately at the same time.
58. Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new chair of governors. In August 2024 the previous headteacher became principal of the Brighton College family of schools and a new headteacher of Brighton College took up his position.
59. There are six boarding houses on the main college site, three for male pupils and two for female pupils. A co-educational boarding house for some sixth-form pupils is situated close to the campus.
60. The school has identified 227 pupils as having SEND. A very small number of pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
61. English is an additional language for 193 pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to provide an environment of kindness and inclusivity in which pupils can grow into tolerant, confident and intellectually curious human beings. It seeks to ensure that pupils develop a love of learning, the knowledge and skills they will need in the future and an understanding that they can make a difference, locally and globally.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

15 to 17 October 2024

63. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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