

# Woodlands School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113644
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	357385
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen McShane

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	73
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	2
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vernon Pinches
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrea Hemmens
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2010
<b>School address</b>	Bodmin Road Plymouth Devon PL5 4DZ
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<b>Age group</b>	2–17
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	357385

**Boarding provision**

**Social care Unique Reference Number**

**Social care inspector**

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors visited nine classes, observed the teaching of 10 teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also looked at a range of other evidence, including data on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, minutes of meetings and information on the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The responses to questionnaires by 12 parents and carers, 17 pupils and 32 staff were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The implications of any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching on pupils' progress and learning.
- Whether the new curriculum is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and ensures progression.
- The effectiveness of the governing body in providing challenge and holding the school to account.

## Information about the school

Woodlands School is part of the Wood View Learning Community, a federation which also includes a secondary school, a primary school, a children's centre, a nursery and a centre for young parents located on a campus in north Plymouth. There is one governing body for all the provision and a campus director is responsible for promoting collaboration between the various partners. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs related to significant physical, sensory, medical and learning needs. The others are undergoing statutory assessment. The school has nine class groups, including newly-formed sixth form provision that opened in September 2010. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its nursery and three mixed-aged class groups. The vast majority of pupils at the school are from a White British heritage.

The residential provision is open for 50 weeks per year and offers short breaks and respite care to pupils from Woodlands and other schools throughout that time. There are current proposals to remodel this service.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Woodlands is a good school where pupils make good progress whatever their starting points or particular needs or disabilities. Pupils are engaging and thoughtful. Their behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. High-quality care from sensitive and knowledgeable adults results in pupils being treated with respect and dignity and feeling extremely safe. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start, particularly in the Nursery. The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are extremely satisfied with the school.

The school curriculum offers a wide variety of interesting and different opportunities for pupils. Its new organisation is part of the school's ongoing and good response to the significant changes in the complexity of needs of the pupils. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in some respects but is inconsistent. The wealth of assessment data that the school collects is insufficiently used to inform planning and lessons. This means that at times the activities, pace and questioning are not pitched accurately enough to meet the different needs of pupils and ensure that they are consistently challenged in lessons to make the best progress they can.

The residential service is in a period of transition, but it remains a good service with several outstanding features. It responds very effectively to the diverse and individual needs of the pupils, including their complex health needs, ensuring that pupils are cared for extremely well.

The headteacher has successfully established the school as a full part of the Woodview Campus. She has high aspirations for the future and has set challenging targets for pupils. The school works extremely effectively with a wide range of partners. A relatively new senior management team has made some recent changes that have improved day-to-day efficiency and communication. However, the members are aware that a small minority of staff still do not feel fully involved in the development of the school. In addition, some leadership roles, particularly of curriculum leaders, are not sufficiently developed to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently improving. Capacity for improvement remains good due to the senior team's accurate and honest assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development and its ongoing determination and plans. Governors are very committed to the pupils and to the school and keep in close contact. They have recently reorganised their meetings structure so that they can support and challenge more effectively. These changes have not yet had time to impact fully.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in lessons so that it is consistently good or better:

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- by using information from pupils' assessments to ensure that objectives, pace, questioning and activities are accurately matched to pupils' needs and challenge them to make good progress
- disseminating some of the best practice and adopting it through the school.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
  - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, including curriculum leaders
  - providing appropriate professional development so appropriate leaders play a full part in accurately monitoring the quality of teaching and its development
  - ensuring that all staff are knowledgeable about their role in ongoing improvement and feel that their contribution is valued.
- Strengthen the governing body's knowledge of how to monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils leave school with a good range of different qualifications. In the past, pupils have been successful in GCSEs and level 2 qualifications. Recently, as the profile of the school has changed, pupils have gained entry level qualifications, National Skills Profile (NSP) vocational qualifications or Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards. Pupils go successfully onto a range of destinations, including a local sixth form or specialist colleges. Data and current work show that progress overall is good through the school. It is particularly strong in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and in information and communication technology (ICT). Good and outstanding progress in ICT means that some pupils learn to make simple choices through the operation of switches. Some use a wide range of technology to communicate with specialist devices and others leave with a life skill that they can use in their future work or study and to participate in important social networks.

Pupils enjoy school very much, and they are very cooperative and enthusiastic. However, their learning in individual lessons is uneven and is closely related to the quality of teaching. When the activities are accurately matched to the individual's prior assessment and learning style, learning is at least good. Pupils do not make the same progress when too long is spent in groups sitting passively. Despite the inconsistencies in teaching, pupils make their good progress because of the engaging curriculum and the outstanding care and support that gives them the confidence to succeed.

Speaking with pupils, feedback from parents and carers and observations during the inspection confirm that pupils feel exceptionally safe at school and when staying at the short-breaks service. Pupils have confidence in staff that they will sort things out for them. Any distress or confusion is quickly resolved. Pupils are very respectful and thoughtful towards each other. Many are very aware of each others' needs and considerate towards these. Those pupils who exhibit behaviour that is challenging do not disrupt learning significantly and are making very good progress in improving it. Pupils are proud of their school and respond extremely well to the wide range of cultural experiences it offers.

Pupils keep healthy through their eager participation in a wide variety of physical activities, including 'Wake and Shake' every morning, Rebound Therapy, hydrotherapy, outdoor

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activities and specialist sports coaching. Eating programmes, devised in partnership with the speech and language therapist, mean that pupils are developing feeding, chewing and swallowing skills appropriately.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school by carrying out particular jobs and through their school and campus councils. They have assisted with recruitment interviews for staff and participated in a local authority video on disability awareness. They are developing important skills for their economic well-being by indicating choice, communicating their needs, and making good progress in literacy and mathematics, as well as actively participating in enterprise and work experience opportunities. Attendance is average. It is significantly and adversely affected by the complex health needs of a minority of pupils.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

In all lessons there are very positive relationships between adults and pupils. A high staff ratio means that each pupil receives a great deal of individual attention. In the best lessons, questioning is very precise and is clearly based on a detailed knowledge of a pupils' development of, for example, which colours or shapes they already know and

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which they are now learning. Activities are most successful when they are planned with precise learning intentions in mind, such as different activities dependent on individual pupils' previous knowledge of number recognition and number bonds and what learning comes next. In too many lessons learning intentions are too wide. This means that, while activities may be engaging, interesting and fun, the level of challenge is inappropriate. Too much is dependent on the additional adults trying to tailor the work sufficiently. A number of good systems are in place to capture and track learning. The use and impact of these are inconsistent.

The new curriculum organisation is in its early stages and, although some variation in planning has been identified, it ensures appropriate coverage and progression. It integrates specialist techniques well and the use of symbols, signing and communication devices is evident. It is significantly supplemented by a wide variety of different activities. Enrichment weeks are designed so that they develop skills and widen pupils' experience. An example of this was the detailed study of China, with pupils exploring dance, food, art and calligraphy. Over a third of pupils have opportunities to learn alongside their mainstream peers in individual subjects. The majority eat daily alongside pupils from the other schools and have opportunities to work with them as part of whole-school and group opportunities or campus clubs.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff are very committed to the individual needs of each pupil. Specialist support to meet multi-sensory impairment, and medical, physical or language needs is integrated very well into day-to-day activities. There are excellent relationships between health and social care colleagues so that consultations or important meetings can be coordinated and held on the school site. The short-breaks service actively supports the education process and progress of the children. There is very good communication between the care team and education staff. Behaviour management programmes are highly effective. The pupils' 'voice' is given high priority and this is evident in care plans and the development of person-centred planning for transition reviews.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Since the last inspection the school has moved to a new site as part of a campus, responded to a changing profile of need, established a sixth form, restructured its residential provision and renewed its senior management team. The headteacher has successfully steered the school through these significant changes while maintaining high



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quality care and good progress for pupils. There are also ambitious plans in place for continued improvement.

The roles of the multi-disciplinary extended leadership team and those responsible for curriculum coordination are insufficiently developed. They are not robustly monitoring nor are they accountable for improvements in teaching and learning. Governors have pulled together the different partners on the campus into a learning community and welcome the opportunities that their new organisation has given them to learn more about the data and plans of Woodlands. They recognise, however, it is early days and they still find it difficult to hold the school to account sufficiently.

Safeguarding procedures are good. The school takes the protection of its young people very seriously and effective procedures are in place to keep young people safe and to respond appropriately if there are any concerns.

Partnerships make a significant and considerable contribution to the curriculum and to the specialist support pupils receive. The school's successful outreach service supports pupils in a large number of primary and secondary schools, giving ongoing advice and technical expertise as well as providing specialist equipment and innovative ideas.

There is a strong commitment to equality of opportunity at Woodlands. Policies and training are regularly reviewed and updated. The school data show that no group of pupils is underachieving. Good community cohesion is evident, not only in the school's ongoing commitment to the needs of its own learners and their families and to the Woodview community, but also in the work to educate others about disability and a variety of links nationally and internationally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children are making good progress and developing important independence and self-care skills. Individual targets are appropriately challenging. Behaviour is well managed and there are appropriate plans in place where necessary. Skilful adults support individuals well and make good use of assessments and observations to inform future learning. There are very good links with parents and other partners and 'team around the child' meetings are held regularly. Teaching is good overall, although is variable in the different classes. It is strongest in the Nursery where very clear intended learning outcomes are expected in a fun and lively environment that is engaging for the children and consistently maintains their interest. Leaders and managers ensure that staff have appropriate ongoing training to meet children's needs and development planning is closely linked to the school's priorities. There has been no monitoring yet to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for children in the different classes, in particular their access to outdoor provision and the balance of child-led and adult-led activities.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Sixth form

This provision is at an early stage of development and has only two students currently. They are making satisfactory progress and responding to the varied timetable on offer and the raised expectations. There are appropriate plans in place to work with partners, particularly the campus secondary school and a work provider, to develop the sixth form further, in particular its responsiveness to the students' own aspirations.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

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## Boarding provision

The quality of boarding is good. It has some outstanding features. The school meets all of the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Children live in a healthy environment that comprehensively identifies and provides for their individual health care needs. A 24-hour waking nurse team oversees the complex health care needs of the children and young people and fully consults with parents, other health care professionals and staff from care and education. There is a comprehensive medicines policy and medications are well managed. Children are provided with healthy, nutritious and popular meals.

The welfare of the children is promoted well. Children are encouraged to develop appropriate behaviours through praise, nurturing and reinforcement messages. Staff receive training in behaviour management and there are records in relation to sanctions and physical interventions. Neither of these is used with any regularity within the short-breaks service because children behave very well and are well managed.

Children and young people are listened to and able to identify staff that they would speak to if needed. Staff were seen to offer children and young people choices in all aspects of daily living using various methods of alternative communication. Each child and young person has a detailed assessment of individual need and a placement plan written in conjunction with parents and overseen by a key worker. These plans are regularly reviewed and amended as required. There is very good communication with a pupil's home. Parents who contributed to a recent questionnaire survey run by the service were positive in their responses regarding the quality of care and support given by the short-breaks service.

Staff are very aware of the individuality of those using the service. Plans clearly lay out how care should be delivered in relation to meeting complex individual needs, including cultural and religious needs. The activities and outings arranged by staff take full account of risks, opportunities for learning or enjoyment together, and individual needs. Staff ensure that activities are available to all, whatever their need, and demonstrate a commitment to this through detailed planning or repetitions of an activity for small groups.

The standard of accommodation is good. Children have individual bedrooms large enough to accommodate the individually tailored furniture and equipment they need. Bathrooms are very spacious, and are well equipped with appropriate aids built into the design. Communal areas are well presented, homely and practical. There is a large open air balcony leading off the lounge. This is used for relaxation, leisure and some gardening activity during good weather. This area was being prepared for an outside Christmas display during the inspection.

The service has a clear statement of care principles and practice. Children are supported by staff who are very aware of their needs and emphasis is placed on providing continuity and consistency of care. The care and nursing teams work closely with other therapists and specialists within the school community to ensure individual needs are met. Minimum staffing levels are set, but are flexible and are constantly reviewed in order to meet the needs of the children. Staff are appropriately qualified and well supported through regular supervision, appraisal and training opportunities. They have a professional and enthusiastic approach to their work.

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The service is well managed and there is frequent monitoring of the care that is provided. There is a particularly effective monitoring and reporting format used by the headteacher. This ensures that issues raised during monitoring visits can be tracked through action points to a conclusion. As the service was remodelled in April 2010, many of the management changes and procedures evidenced have only recently been introduced. They are, therefore, not yet fully embedded into the service and the issues of appropriate registration remain unresolved.

**National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care**

*These are the grades for the boarding provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the boarding provision</b>	<b>2</b>
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**Views of parents and carers**

All parent and carers who replied to the questionnaire were happy with their child's experience at the school. A few praised the school. One in particular said, 'Woodlands School is the best thing that has happened in our son's short, traumatic life so far.' One comment was received that related to difficulties with ongoing communication. The school has a range of different and effective methods of keeping in touch with parents and carers, including newsletters, home-school books, a website and a parental support adviser. However, it recognised within its own self-evaluation that there is always more it can do to improve communication further.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodlands to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	50	6	50	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	58	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	33	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	67	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	92	1	8	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



5 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Woodlands School, Plymouth PL6 5ES**

Thank you so much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, seeing you learn maths and reading and watching you dance in drama and make biscuits in food technology. We were very impressed by the way you are taught to use switches, communicators and computers to help you.

We found out that Woodlands is a good school. This is why:

- you are making good progress in your learning
- adults care for you extremely well at school and in the short-break service
- you are really safe at school
- your behaviour is excellent and you are kind to each other.

We have asked the headteacher to make things even better by making sure that:

- teaching in every lesson is good
- governors and other adults keep checking that your school is working the best it can and changing things if it would help you learn more.

You can help by always trying hard. Keep up your outstanding behaviour. It was a privilege to meet you all.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane

Her Majesty's Inspector



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