

Colchester Institute

Further education college

Inspection dates 6–9 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requir	Requires improvement		
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement	
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good	
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspe	ection		Good	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The college's quality assurance processes and improvement planning lack clarity and coherence. Leaders do not focus on the impact of teachers' practice on learners' progress. As a result, essential improvements are not made to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have not sufficiently improved the quality of English and mathematics teaching. As a result, learners and apprentices make slow progress in these subjects.
- Too few adult learners and learners who have high needs achieve their qualifications.
- Leaders do not routinely gather information on the destinations of learners and apprentices. As a result, they are not aware of the impact of their curriculum.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have taken prudent steps to secure the financial stability of the college. As a result, leaders have established new facilities to meet employers' needs.
- Teachers ensure that most learners and apprentices develop effective practical skills. As a result, learners and apprentices produce high-quality practical work.

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of learners, particularly at level 1. As a result, learners do not make expected progress in developing new or more in-depth knowledge.
- Too many teachers do not provide learners with sufficient feedback on the quality of their written work. Consequently, learners do not know what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers do not communicate effectively with learning support staff to enable learners who need additional help with their studies to make swift progress.
- The 'learning shop', the largest strand within adult learning, does not enable learners effectively to gain employment.
- Employers value the technical off-the-job training provided at the college, and most apprentices can apply this learning well within their work.
- Learners benefit from a broad range of workrelated learning and enrichment activities. As a result, they are well prepared for employment.



Full report

Information about the provider

- Colchester Institute is a large general further education college with three main sites located in Colchester, Braintree and Clacton-on-Sea. In addition, the college has a few smaller 'learning shops' throughout Essex for adult learners. The college provides a wide range of vocational 16 to 19 study programmes, apprenticeships and adult learning programmes. The college also has a small provision for learners with high needs. The college works with six subcontractors that provide apprenticeships. One provider also offers study programmes in sport.
- In the borough of Colchester, the largest catchment area for the college, the unemployment rate is slightly below the national rate. The proportion of school leavers who achieve GCSE passes at grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics is above the national rate. However, Colchester Institute recruits most of its learners with GCSE attainment well below the national rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that their actions focus on improving teachers' practice in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications, by ensuring that:
 - the quality of English and mathematics teaching rapidly improves so that learners achieve their qualifications in these subjects and make progress in improving skills
 - teachers have high expectations of what their learners can achieve and set challenging activities to ensure that learners develop and apply more in-depth knowledge
 - teachers and assessors provide feedback to learners and apprentices that enables them to improve their work.
- Ensure that information on the destinations of learners and apprentices is routinely gathered and reviewed in order to inform leaders' curriculum planning.
- Ensure that teachers work productively with learning support staff to enable learners who need additional help with their studies to make swift progress.
- Make sure that adults enrolled on the 'learning shop' provision acquire the work-related skills that they need to gain employment.



Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors set high ambitions for the college. Most staff clearly understand these. Leaders have recently completed a restructure of management tiers in order to improve cross-college communication and secure improvement in the quality of provision. However, too many meetings at all levels of staffing throughout the college, including those involving leaders and managers, lack sufficient focus on improving teaching and ensuring that learners make swift progress.
- Leaders' self-assessment of the quality of provision is too generous. While they identifying numerous weaknesses in teachers' practice, they consider teaching, learning and assessment and leadership and management to be good.
- Leaders accurately identify many weaknesses in poorly performing subjects. However, they do not ensure that their improvement action plans and forums, many recently established, function coherently and raise the quality of provision. Leaders and managers do not make sure that improvement planning at all levels is incisive and evaluative and that it focuses on swiftly improving teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have not sufficiently improved the quality of the teaching of English and mathematics.
- Leaders and managers collect and use data that enables them to have a sound understanding of learners' retention, attendance and predicted achievement. However, they do not have a robust understanding of the progress that learners are making.
- Too many observations and subject area progress checks of teaching, learning and assessment do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teachers' practice on learners' progress and outcomes. As a result, leaders and managers do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in too many subjects. This impairs their capacity to secure sustainable improvement.
- Leaders and governors conduct prudent financial management to secure financial stability in the context of significant historical debt. As a result, leaders have been able to commit considerable capital funds to establish new science, technology, engineering, media and digital skills facilities to meet employers' needs. Consequently, leaders have established very effective partnerships with many employers.
- Leaders and managers work productively with a host of employers, the local enterprise partnership, local authorities, and Essex Employment and Skills Board to ensure that the range and content of provision meet skills gaps and priorities. They continue to set their curriculum to meet current regional employment demands effectively, such as in housing, engineering and manufacturing. Leaders are particularly proactive in planning to ensure that their curriculum meets the impending employment opportunities arising from the potential power station developments at Sizewell and Bradwell.
- Although teachers collect data on the destinations of learners at course level, leaders do not analyse this information to ensure that their curriculum fully meets the needs of their learners. Leaders do not accurately understand the proportion of learners who repeat learning at level 1 and level 2 the following year.
- Leaders' quality assurance arrangements for subcontracted provision are mostly effective.

 Managers effectively monitor most aspects of subcontractors' performance through



regular performance management meetings and an annual review process. However, leaders and managers do not pay sufficient attention to ensuring that subcontracting staff make certain that their learners and apprentices are challenged enough to deepen their learning and make rapid progress.

■ Leaders continue to provide an inclusive environment across the college's campuses. Learners and staff exhibit high levels of mutual respect and courtesy. Trained staff ensure that most younger learners and apprentices have a good understanding of the British values of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. However, too many adult learners do not share this good understanding.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have considerable and relevant expertise in the commercial and education sectors. They are acutely aware of most of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They have worked diligently with leaders to help ensure that the college is on a secure financial footing.
- Governors pay insufficient attention to rectifying weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment in their meetings. While they demonstrate much robust challenge of leaders, they have not had enough impact on securing improvements in outcomes for learners or apprentices.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have precise policies and procedures in place that are understood by staff and help ensure that learners feel safe and are safe. However, a minority of staff have not received updated safeguarding training in the past three years.
- The lead managers accountable for the safeguarding record monitor and follow up safeguarding referrals assiduously to full resolution. Managers maintain accurate records of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the single central register. Leaders ensure that the college adheres to safer recruitment practices.
- Guest speakers, including employees of subcontractors, are vetted thoroughly. Lead managers accountable for safeguarding work effectively with the Essex Strategic Children's Partnership, the Local Safeguarding Children Board, local police and other external agencies to ensure that learners are supported and kept safe. The 'stay safe' partnership forum includes collaborative working to reduce the risks of young people joining gangs and of involvement in 'county lines' drug trafficking. Younger learners have a sound understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, but too many adults and apprentices do not have such a good awareness.



Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers and assessors do not make enough use of the information on learners' starting points to provide suitable stretch and challenge. Teachers' expectations of most learners are not high enough. Teaching on study programmes is pitched at the middle range of ability, with the result that learning does not support those who need additional help or challenge the more able.
- In theory lessons on study programmes, teachers do not routinely check learning well enough before moving on to the next topic. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to test out new concepts and ideas. They do not often extend their learning so that they become more accomplished in applying these to work-related situations. However, apprentices in most lessons improve skills and attitudes to learning that they apply well in their workplaces and which employers value.
- Too few learners on study programmes, and in adult learning, advance their higher learning and thinking skills. While most learners produce work of the minimum expected standard for their level of course, learners are not routinely able to extend their depth of understanding of underpinning theory. Most teachers and assessors do not enable more capable learners and apprentices to excel and make swift progress in deepening their knowledge of key concepts.
- English and mathematics teaching is not tailored to the needs and abilities of learners. English teachers present topics that are not linked effectively to the skills that learners need to improve. Teachers do not ensure that learners have sufficient opportunities to consolidate the mathematics skills that they have had difficulty with in the past. Most-able learners are not challenged sufficiently to master the specific skills that they need to achieve high grades.
- Most teachers of vocational subjects do not routinely promote the value of English and mathematics skills in their teaching. Too many vocational teachers do not enable learners to gain the English and communication skills that they will need in employment or to progress to higher-level study. For example, teachers do not identify or help learners to correct errors in their use of inappropriate technical vocabulary. However, teachers of apprentices in vocational subjects successfully enable them to apply and extend their use of these skills.
- Learners' starting points are assessed thoroughly before they start their courses. This enables support for those who need additional help with their studies to be put in place swiftly. However, teachers and learning support staff do not plan this support to ensure that targeted learners make the progress of which they are capable. Too many learning support staff conduct learning activities on behalf of learners and, as a result, these learners do not work independently or make rapid progress.
- Too often, teachers do not provide comprehensive feedback to learners so that they know how to improve their work. Most teachers do not prepare learners on level 2 courses well enough for their external assessments. As a result, too many learners are not successful in achieving their qualifications at level 2. However, feedback on assignments at level 3 is often helpful in guiding learners on how to improve their grades, particularly in art and design.



- Teachers and assessors are well qualified and experienced in their subjects. Many have very good links with industry. They utilise these connections to enrich their teaching and provide industry-specific contexts that help learners understand the relevance of the knowledge, skills and behaviours demanded by employers.
- Learners and apprentices develop good practical skills and produce work to a high standard. They use equipment and tools confidently and adeptly. For example, in a level 3 carpentry lesson, learners were able to proficiently use a range of wood-working techniques and machines and were able to produce furniture to a high standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' and apprentices' attendance has improved from this time last year and is now high on vocational courses. However, learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons remains poor. It was low at the time of inspection, with only half the learners in attendance at many lessons observed.
- Most learners benefit from a wide range of work-related learning experiences that prepare them well for their next steps and employment. For example, in a level 1 professional chef lesson, learners successfully prepared a three-course lunch for servicing in the college restaurant.
- Learners and apprentices know how to keep themselves safe. They feel safe in and around the college and in their workplaces. Managers ensure that enrichment events raise learners' awareness of welfare and safety issues. For example, foundation learners at the Clacton site participated in training on the dangers of knife crime provided by a local charity and the police. As a result, they improved their understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe from the use of weapons.
- Learners engage in a wide range of enrichment activities that complement their studies. These include collaborative projects, visits, trips and guest speakers. For example, engineering and public services learners worked well together to design and build a permanent memorial structure in the grounds of the college to commemorate the war dead. Good-quality enrichment opportunities within English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and supported learning courses enable learners to engage confidently with the wider community.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the college sites. Learners are tolerant and respectful of each other's views and work willingly together in groups. They respond well to teachers' instructions.
- Younger learners and apprentices have a good understanding of British values and apply these well in their learning. However, most adults do not know how British values impact on their lives.
- Learners are well prepared for their future career choices and for their next steps. They receive effective impartial careers advice and guidance from staff and make informed decisions about their career aspirations. However, although adult learners referred to the college by Jobcentre Plus achieve their qualifications, they do not improve the skills that they need to help them with their future goals and employment.



Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Too many learners do not make swift progress from their starting points, particularly learners on study programmes at levels 1 and 2 and adult learners. Some most-able apprentices do not make swift enough progress towards achieving challenging targets
- Leaders' data indicates that not enough learners on study programmes achieve their qualifications over time. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship has improved slightly over the last academic year, as has the proportion who achieve within planned timescales, both of which are above the low national rate.
- However, there remains too much variation between subjects in the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. Leaders' data indicates that not enough study programmes learners who are studying motor vehicle, child care and science make good progress and achieve their qualifications. Conversely, most enrolled on engineering, hospitality and catering courses complete their qualifications. Not enough apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieve within their planned timescales. Leaders' data indicates that for the current academic year, younger apprentices are making better progress than previously.
- Too few adults achieve their qualifications. For example, too many of the learners enrolled on ESOL courses do not make swift progress and achieve their qualifications. The proportion of learners who have high needs and who achieve their qualifications is low and has declined over the last three years.
- The standard of learners' and apprentices' practical work is good. The standard of learners' written work mostly meets the minimum requirements of their qualifications. However, learners are not challenged sufficiently by teachers to excel and produce high standards of work. Some learners' written and theory work, particularly at level 1, is of a poor quality.
- The majority of learners and apprentices who study English and mathematics qualifications make less than expected progress. Those with entry grades 3/D in GCSE make particularly poor progress in achieving higher grades. Too few learners and apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieve functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2.
- Learners with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability do not achieve in line with their peers. The proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 who achieve their qualifications is lower than for apprentices aged 19 and over.
- Leaders do not routinely collect and analyse information on the destinations of learners on study programmes. Leaders do not monitor where learners transition to once they have completed their studies. As a result, leaders are unable to accurately assess the impact of the curriculum. Only a few unemployed adult learners gain employment. However, most learners on access to higher education courses successfully progress to university.



Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- A total of 3,739 learners are enrolled on study programmes. Around 3,690 are aged 16 to 18 with the remainder over 19 years of age. Around a quarter of learners study at level 1, a third at level 2 and the largest proportion at level 3. The college offers programmes in most subject areas. Leaders ensure that the principles of study programmes are met fully.
- In the majority of courses, teachers do not promote high enough expectations of their learners, particularly at level 1. They do not routinely set challenging activities that enable learners to make good progress in acquiring new or more in-depth knowledge.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not provide demanding tasks and activities that challenge learners to excel. For example, most GCSE mathematics teachers do not set learners activities appropriate to their skills and starting points. As a result, too many learners do not improve their mathematics skills.
- Too many teachers do not provide learners with sufficient feedback on the quality and presentation of their written work. While most learners know the target grades that they are working towards, they do not know what they need to do to achieve a higher grade or to deepen their learning. However, the comprehensive written feedback that level 3 learners receive on their assignments enables them to improve their work.
- Most teachers do not enable learners to improve their reading, listening and speaking skills well enough on vocational courses. Teachers do not routinely correct technical spellings which are pertinent to their learners' careers. As a result, too many learners do not gain the necessary skills required by employers.
- Teachers on vocational courses do not routinely promote the improvement of learners' mathematical skills. They do provide learners with sufficient opportunities to master the numeracy skills required to successfully problem-solve.
- Most teachers of practical lessons effectively challenge the more able to extend their learning. Learners acquire good levels of practical skills that prepare them well for work. Most learners apply technical knowledge to practical activities well.
- Learners improve their understanding of the demands of employers through participating in a broad range of work-related learning activities, including work experience placements. Most learners gain good skills that are required for their vocational areas and which enhance their readiness for employment. For example, hospitality learners make considerable progress in acquiring front-of-house skills through operating a hotel for a week.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- At the time of inspection, there were approximately 1,300 adult learners enrolled on courses at the college. The largest strand of provision comprises learners who are referred by Jobcentre Plus, and who study in the college's 'learning shops'. Other learners study on ESOL, 'supported learning', access to higher education and vocational courses.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' written work does not help them to improve their written



English skills. For example, some ESOL teachers identify learners' errors, but they do not then enable learners to independently apply this learning and improve their writing. Vocational teachers do not identify basic and subject-related writing errors within learners' work. As a result, learners do not correct their work, use appropriate terminology and augment their learning and progress.

- Teachers of most subjects do not enable learners to improve their personal, social and employability skills. Within the 'learning shops', teachers focus too much on learners finishing tasks that lead to completing their qualification rather than on the skills and knowledge they need to meet targets and goals such as gaining employment. Too often, learners do not know how the course they are studying will help them secure a job. Adult learners' understanding of British Values is too limited.
- Too many teachers do not challenge ESOL learners to make swift progress. Too many learners progress to study at a higher level without having achieved all the parts of their course at the previous, lower level. As a result, these learners do not consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills before attempting to grasp more complex theory.
- Teachers of supported learning and ESOL courses effectively enable learners to improve their mathematics skills. For example, learners studying entry level ESOL courses develop good mathematics-related vocabulary and proficiently apply new numeric understanding to solve calculations involving ratio, proportion and percentages.
- Teachers of access to higher education courses provide learners with good-quality teaching that enables them to work analytically, undertake in-depth research and improve their higher-level thinking skills.
- Learners on vocational courses develop their practical skills to a good standard and relate these skills well to current and future employment. In hairdressing, beauty therapy, construction and dental nursing, teachers use direct links with employers to effectively draw on real-life work examples and industry expectations and bolster learners' understanding.
- Managers and teachers ensure that vocational teaching interests those least likely to participate in education or those with previously poor experiences of education. For example, teachers of construction and engineering courses successfully target hard-to-reach learners, including those leaving the armed forces.
- Learners feel safe at college and know how to respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that they have. Teachers in workshops ensure that learners work safely and effectively promote the importance of protective equipment and clothing when working on practical tasks.

Apprenticeships

Good

- At the time of inspection, there were approximately 1,500 apprentices. One third of these apprentices were on standards-based apprenticeships and two thirds on frameworks. The highest proportion of provision is in engineering and manufacturing, and other areas provided include business administration and law, health, public services and care, retail and commercial, and construction. Around half of the apprentices are aged 16 to 18.
- Most apprentices make rapid progress in improving their practical skills and produce work of a good, commercial standard. The large majority of apprentices make swift progress in



their understanding of technical knowledge and skills through well-planned off-the-job training at college. However, staff do not sufficiently challenge some most-able apprentices to further their thinking and analytical skills. As a result, a minority of apprentices are not progressing as quickly as they could.

- Most apprentices relate vocational theory to practice well and use technical language confidently to explain what they are doing and why. For example, welding apprentices were able to competently explain how the variation of heat intensity impacted on their welds and how they adjust their practice to improve the quality of their melting and soldering work.
- Teachers ensure that they are able to apply their English and mathematics skills well within their technical lessons. Most teachers enable apprentices to improve their use of written English and to extend their use of mathematical skills. For example, plumbing apprentices were able to successfully manually calculate the combustion ratios that a meter would automatically calculate.
- Employers value the technical off-the-job training that apprentices receive at college. Most apprentices can apply this learning well at work. For example, an advanced-level hairdressing apprentice learned a new colour-mixing technique at college, which she successfully introduced to her employer. A motor vehicle apprentice following an advanced programme completed complex restoration tasks on a bespoke vintage car.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety requirements at work and know how to keep themselves safe in their personal lives. However, apprentices who have been in learning for over 18 months have not received training in digital safety and are not aware of potential online risks.
- Almost all apprentices are on a programme that fully meets the requirements of the apprenticeship. However, a very few apprentices enrolled on child care programmes do not have sufficient off-the-job training. Managers' monitoring of off-the-job training of these programmes is weak.
- Leaders have been responsive in adopting new standards-based apprenticeships. Leaders are flexible and responsive to employers in the design of apprenticeships programmes. For example, they ensure that a national vocational qualification (NVQ) qualification is integrated into standards-based apprenticeships in welding to meet the demands of local employers. Leaders have introduced an intermediate groundworks apprenticeships programme in response to the needs of local industry.
- Too few apprentices regularly attend their English and mathematics lessons. Teachers of these subjects do not set high enough expectations, build on apprentices' prior knowledge or use activities that will enable them to learn new skills quickly. Apprentices, therefore, make slow progress in mastering these essential skills. Managers have introduced a new online resource to help apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills, but apprentices do not routinely use this.
- Too many assessors do not set challenging targets with apprentices that enable them to deepen their knowledge and skills. A few assessors pre-populate recordings of apprentices' reviews of progress with generic text and do not identify the specific progress that apprentices make. They fail to ensure that some of the most-able apprentices make swift progress in extending their knowledge, understanding and skills.



Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- The college currently provides provision for 61 learners who have high needs. Of these, 42 are enrolled on foundation courses that focus on independent living, employability and life skills courses. The remaining learners study on a range of vocational courses at levels 1 to 3. A further 70 learners have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Provision for all learners is provided across all three of the college's main sites.
- Too many teachers do not provide tasks and activities that interest and challenge learners to make rapid progress. Not enough routinely check learners' understanding and, as a result, too many learners are not sufficiently involved in the learning process and do not make progress as swiftly as they could.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is sufficiently broad for a minority of learners. Learners cannot progress to supported internships within the college, and too few gain the skills required to progress on to vocational provision.
- Staff effectively manage learners' transition from school to college. Learners settle well into college as a consequence of effective links with the local authority, schools, parents, carers and support agencies. Managers consult well with the local authority and ensure that statutory requirements of the EHC plan are met. This enables learners to improve their personal, social, communication and employability skills well.
- Most teachers use good specialist resources with learners to enable them to make good progress. These include appropriate and adapted teaching accommodation, specialist staff for learners on mainstream courses, including communication aids, communication and sign language interpreters and adaptive technology. As a result, learners who have need for these specialist resources are able to make good progress and achieve their goals.
- The majority of staff use learners' EHC plan targets to ensure that learners develop good levels of independence and life skills. Teachers effectively record achievements of non-accredited learning to ensure that learners recognise their good personal progress. However, teachers in mainstream lessons do not always take account of some issues that are clearly identified in learners' profiles. They do not provide the specific help required and, as a result, too many of these learners do not make the progress of which they are capable towards achieving accredited learning goals.
- Teachers ensure that learners improve their English and mathematics skills through practical activities that successfully challenge learners to consolidate and extend their skills. For example, in a cookery lesson, the teachers used good questioning techniques and illustrative peer demonstrations to ensure that learners could successfully calculate portion and size and correctly relate these to weight, capacity and quantity.



Provider details

Unique reference number 130674

Type of provider General further education college

7,969

Age range of learners 16 to 18/19+

Approximate number of all learners over the previous full

contract year

Principal/CEO Alison Andreas

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Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	3 19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	
	865	281	1118	510	1705	438	2	47	
Number of apprentices by	Intermediate		te	Advanced			Higher		
apprenticeship level and age	16–18	16–18 19+		16–18	19+	16-	-18	19+	
	376	376 189		388	418	9)	55	
Number of traineeships	16–19			19+			Total		
	-			-			-		
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-								
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	61								
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Bitech Training Ltd/Institute of Cast Metals Engineers (ICME) Career Track (Tendring District Council) EASI Hairdressing Academy MEAT Ipswich Virtual Learning UK TES Training								



Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive vice-principal of curriculum, planning and quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and of the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers, and these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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