

# Arden Primary School

Baker Street, Sparkhill, Birmingham, West Midlands B11 4SF

## Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>        |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b>        |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b>        |
| Early years provision                        | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- A strong sense of community pervades the school. This is a highly inclusive school where tolerance, acceptance and equality abound.
- The new headteacher's strong leadership and determination, together with excellent support from senior leaders and governors, are highly effective in maintaining the high-quality provision across the school.
- Leaders, including governors, demonstrate a strong moral purpose and a passion to ensure that every child is successful. Leadership and management at every level are outstanding.
- Leaders have developed an exceptional staff team that is fully committed to the shared vision for high standards and broadening pupils' horizons.
- Governors know the school well. They use their expertise and skills to support and challenge school leaders effectively.
- Teaching is good. Although teachers' expectations of children are high, sometimes work does not provide enough challenge to pupils to develop their learning to a greater depth across the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are exceptionally well supported. Personalised learning support enables them to be successful and make the progress of which they are capable.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are extremely effective. All staff and governors are fully committed to ensuring that 'everybody matters'. They are continually mindful of pupils' welfare.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are self-confident, with a well-developed understanding of how to be successful in their learning.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and their conduct around the school is exemplary.
- The early years provision is of a very high quality. It is very well led and managed, teaching is outstanding, and all groups of children make exceptional progress from their low starting points.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for physical education (PE), drama, music and technology are exceptionally strong. The curriculum for mathematics has been revised but changes are not fully embedded. Opportunities to study other foundation subjects are not as well developed and pupils' progress is slower as a result.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely supportive and fully engaged with the work of the school.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
  - continuing to raise expectations and the level of challenge for all pupils across the curriculum
  - embedding the recent changes in the teaching of mathematics so that gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are fully addressed and they make better progress.
- Continue to refine the curriculum to ensure coherence and progression across all foundation subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- There is an exceptionally positive ethos within the school, underpinned by high expectations, strong values and an extremely cohesive and committed team of staff. Staff morale is very high. A sense of community and the feeling 'everybody matters' is tangible across the school.
- The dedicated and passionate new headteacher has been pivotal to the continued success of the school. After a period of substantial financial difficulty and significant staffing changes, she has established an extremely strong team of staff determined to ensure that pupils are given the best start in life. As a result, parents are highly positive and feel that their children are very well supported.
- Senior leaders know their school very well. The strengths of the school and areas for improvement are identified accurately in the self-evaluation and detailed in the school development plan. Leaders use this information effectively to drive further improvements in the school. Sustainability and continuity of high-quality provision for every pupil, secured through careful succession planning, are at the heart of the strategic approach taken by leaders. Leadership at all levels, including governance, is extremely strong and ambitious for the school.
- Well-informed, capable and competent middle leaders are highly effective. They demonstrate the skills, knowledge and ambition to drive key developments in their areas of responsibility. They understand how the work they do links directly with improved outcomes for pupils. For example, actions taken to develop the teaching of writing across the school have resulted in improved outcomes for all pupil groups. Action plans are detailed and focused on highly appropriate priorities identified through monitoring. The quality of middle leadership is outstanding.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and contributes greatly to the strong practice of teachers in the school and outcomes for pupils. Targeted professional development opportunities are valued, and staff share expertise willingly, drawing on each other's strengths. Leaders ensure that networks with other schools and providers are strong. Staff appreciate opportunities to learn from others. All staff are highly reflective and relish chances to develop and hone their skills.
- The leadership of pupils with SEND is exceptional. Funding is used appropriately. The coordinator is highly skilled and knowledgeable. Effective systems are in place to identify pupils who need additional support. Excellent provision in Saplings, the school's learning support centre, ensures that pupils with complex needs receive personalised learning support. Staff are well trained, highly skilled and take great delight in seeing pupils make progress, no matter how small the steps. The impact of support is checked carefully to ensure that pupils make secure progress over time. Leaders demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of pupils' barriers to learning and work tirelessly to help pupils overcome them.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of rich learning experiences that include educational visits and work with specialist teachers. Pupils talk enthusiastically about drama, music, PE, computing and personal, social and health education, for which provision is exceptionally strong. Although the curriculum currently covers all aspects of

the primary curriculum, planning in some foundation subjects does not yet contribute enough to pupils' learning opportunities. Leaders are currently carrying out a thorough review of the curriculum.

- A host of extra-curricular activities and clubs supplement the curriculum and provide additional high-quality opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. Clubs include those open to all pupils and others, such as the gifted and talented football club and a physical mobility group, which target specific groups. Activities are very well attended and valued by pupils of all ages.
- The school makes excellent use of additional funding that it receives. The pupil premium funding has been used well to help disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress and reach standards similar to other pupils in the school and nationally. Barriers to learning are swiftly identified and appropriate support provided to help pupils catch up. New leadership in this area is ensuring that the impact of the funding is regularly checked and evaluated. Current tracking information suggests that disadvantaged pupils do at least as well as other pupils and now make much better progress.
- Additional funding for PE and sport is used effectively to ensure that children benefit from high-quality lessons and a wide range of after-school clubs. Specialist staff are highly effective in engaging all pupils in physical activity and supporting teachers to develop their own skills in teaching PE. Provision for PE is a real strength of the school.
- Fundamental British values and the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are deeply embedded in the work of the school. Pupils are tolerant, respectful and show a deep understanding of different cultures. The school is highly inclusive. Equality of opportunity is evident in all aspects of the school's work.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with many commenting that the sense of family and community is so strong that the school feels like an extension of home. While some parents expressed concerns over recent staffing changes, all acknowledged that their children were extremely well cared for and making progress at school.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governance of the school is highly effective. The governing body is extremely well led and provides an effective challenge to school leaders. The chair of governors is highly skilled in governance and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his role. He has been instrumental in developing a strong strategic group of governors who offer support and challenge in equal measure. They are deeply committed to ensuring the best possible education and learning experience for all pupils.
- Through their meetings, governors consider all aspects of the school's work on a regular basis. They engage in constructive, robust discussions and do not accept anything at face value. Governors discuss reports they receive through discussions with staff and pupils. They also visit the school regularly to see the quality of provision for themselves. Governors know the school extremely well.
- Governors share the headteacher's high standards and expectations. They support the headteacher in actions to develop the quality of teaching further. Governors ensure that performance management processes are used effectively to motivate and

challenge.

- The governing body ensures that the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium funding are spent effectively and make a difference to pupils. They scrutinise in detail every aspect of the school budget to see what difference it will make to the quality of education provided. They are aspirational for all pupils and ensure that the children are at the heart of every decision they make.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Comprehensive records, including a key chronology that makes sure that actions are timely, are kept up to date and regularly reviewed by designated safeguarding leaders. Weekly meetings of the Everybody Matters Board ensure that concerns about pupils are followed up swiftly and appropriate support offered to families in need. All staff are vigilant and alert to every child's well-being.
- Robust systems are in place which are understood and used effectively by all members of staff. Appropriate checks are made when recruiting staff. Induction procedures ensure that all new staff are aware of school policies and what to do if they have a concern about a child. Safeguarding training for all staff and governors is up to date.
- Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to care for themselves physically, mentally and practically. Pupils learn to manage risks safely. For example, during weekly computing lessons, pupils consider how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. In the early years, traditional tales such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' are used to help children think about safe choices. Adults take time to discuss worries and feelings with pupils. Pupils say that they feel part of a family at school. Leaders ensure a high focus on well-being for all members of the school community. This is a school where everybody matters.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching across the school is good, with much that is outstanding.
- Teaching at Arden is characterised by the very strong relationships between adults and pupils. Well-organised lessons balance the needs of pupils with different abilities very effectively. Staff have high expectations of pupils, both in their learning and in their behaviour. Positive climates for learning are created, where mistakes are viewed as constructive learning experiences. As a result, pupils try hard and are not afraid to have a go at something new, knowing that they will be well supported by their teachers.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to plan effective sequences of learning. Questioning is used skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to provide further challenge. Adults are skilled at developing pupils' ability to explain and give an informed opinion. They take time to deal with misconceptions and extend learning through additional questions. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding and develop their knowledge effectively over time.
- Expectations of learning behaviours, along with clear classroom routines, are deeply

embedded. As a result, pupils are quick to settle and eager to learn. They collaborate and work well together in pairs or small groups. Time is used well and teachers manage the transition between adult-led teaching to group work effectively. There is a deep learning-focused atmosphere across the school.

- Additional adults provide valuable support across the school. Partnership working with teachers is strong. They interact well with pupils, developing learning and supporting the progress of different groups within the class. They are skilled in ensuring that pupils are not overly reliant on the extra support being provided.
- Guidance for learning for pupils is clear and effective, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and additional adults show pupils what is expected of them and what they need to do to be successful. Pupils respond positively to the feedback they receive and relish the opportunity to improve their work. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly and appropriate support provided to prevent anyone from being left behind.
- Impressive subject knowledge and outstanding teaching in English are leading to stronger progress for current pupils. The teaching of writing is especially good. Teachers carefully plan a sequence of lessons enabling pupils to build on prior knowledge and develop secure skills over time. The focus on developing high-quality vocabulary ensures that pupils have the words and phrases they require to express themselves effectively through the written word.
- Leaders identified reading as a high priority for improvement this year. High-quality professional development and inclusion in a local authority project are further improving the teaching of reading. Investment in a wide range of reading material ensures that books are available in all corners of the school to engage pupils of all ages and abilities. The learning environment reflects this drive to improve reading. Leaders ensure that reading and books are seen to be 'the door into another world' and essential to widening pupils' knowledge of the world.
- The teaching of early reading skills is highly effective. Leaders ensure that staff access regular update training in the teaching of phonics. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. They use this confidently to read and write independently.
- Leaders identified issues in the teaching of mathematics this year. Despite the strong subject knowledge of staff, pupils' progress was hampered by the scheme that was being used. Following a review of the mathematics curriculum, teachers now focus on addressing the gaps in pupils' knowledge and further developing reasoning and problem-solving skills. These changes are not yet fully embedded across the school and there is more to be done to ensure that pupils' progress in mathematics matches that in English.
- The science curriculum is comprehensive and incorporates many opportunities for pupils to use their English and mathematics skills. High-quality investigative work is evident. The technical vocabulary pupils need to be successful is taught well and used effectively to describe what they know and can do.
- The quality of teaching in other curriculum areas, although good, varies. In subjects such as drama, PE, music and RE it is of the highest quality and pupils make very strong progress. For example, while studying 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in drama, pupils develop a secure understanding of individual characters as well as knowing how

to give clear stage directions. However, in other foundation subjects, such as history and geography, the depth and coherence of learning are not as strong.

- For pupils with SEND, the support offered is highly effective. Teachers and additional adults work closely together to ensure that individual needs are met. Expectations of this group are high. Pupils are included effectively.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- At the heart of the school is a desire to ensure that every member of the school community is valued and included. As a result of this, all pupils thrive and flourish. They grow in confidence, developing positive self-esteem. They are thoughtful and empathise sensitively with others. Every aspect of their development is encouraged and celebrated. This is a highly inclusive school.
- Work to develop pupils' understanding of diversity and equality is exceptional. Pupils appreciate that everyone is different and value this richness in their own school community and beyond. Those talking with the inspectors regularly reinforced the viewpoint that everyone is equal and should be respected for their different views, appearance or culture. Deep, thoughtful conversations take place between pupils, for example about the similarities and difference between religions such as Islam and Christianity. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. Tolerance, acceptance and inclusion are the norm in this school.
- Pupils have a well-developed sense of charitable giving and looking after those less fortunate than themselves. They actively work to support others. For example, pupils identify a charity to support, make decisions on how to raise money and take action to make a difference. A recent charity event organised by pupils raised over £1700 for the people in Yemen. The sense of community is deeply embedded in and out of the school.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. They rise to the challenges posed and demonstrate great resilience and determination from an early age. Pupils say that challenges help them learn. They are self-assured learners. Pupils are motivated to learn and want to do their very best. They have high aspirations.
- Talk ambassadors, peer mediators and safeguarding ambassadors are respected by the whole pupil body. Pupils aspire to these leadership roles and, once elected, carry them out diligently. Pupils across the school take responsibility for themselves and the school environment and show a sense of responsibility to those around them.
- Pupils feel extremely safe at school. Their perception is that there is no bullying at school but if there was, they knew for certain that adults would help resolve it very quickly. They know not to share personal information when using the internet and talked confidently about road safety and stranger danger.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well around the school. They are extremely polite and well mannered. They show respect to each other and to the adults who work with them and are especially welcoming to visitors.
- Adults are highly effective role models for pupils of different ages. Respectful relationships exist on every level. Around the school, pupils listen to each other and make sure that all views are heard and included. This is seen in lessons, in the playground at breaktimes and around the school. This is the result of the whole-school approach that values everyone as an equal. There is an extremely strong culture of trust and understanding.
- Behaviour incidents in school are very rare. Adults set high expectations and encourage positive behaviour from the early years onwards. Pupils understand what is acceptable and manage their own behaviour extremely well. They enjoy the many rewards for good behaviour. Pupils are motivated by the badges available and work hard to collect points for their house or have their name written in the Golden Book.
- Pupils behave well because they value their education and enjoy being at school. They take delight in their learning and work conscientiously. Pupils work exceptionally well together and discuss their thoughts in groups or pairs in order to develop ideas and improve their work.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They wear their uniform with pride and take great care of the learning environment and the resources and equipment that they use.
- Teachers make sure that lessons are highly engaging and as a result, pupils want to be at school. Attendance has improved over the last three years for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with SEND. Leaders monitor attendance closely and work effectively with families where attendance is a particular concern. Leaders and all staff consistently promote 'every day as a learning day'.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- Following a significant drop in standards after the last inspection, outcomes for pupils have now improved. For the last three years, the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Better progress is well established across the school now. This is a result of higher expectations from leaders and all teachers.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 rose significantly in 2017 to well above the national average. This was maintained in 2018. This is a result of securely good phonics teaching across Reception and key stage 1. Pupils are encouraged to use their phonics skills at every opportunity when reading and writing independently.
- The progress of current pupils is strong in all year groups, especially in reading and writing. The school's accurate and robust assessments show that the improvements made are being built on. Work in the books of current pupils shows rapid progress, especially in writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is now similar to that of other pupils in reading, writing



and mathematics. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils who reach expected standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have risen. The books of current pupils show that they continue to make strong progress. The differences in attainment and progress between different groups of pupils have reduced.

- As a result of highly effective, bespoke provision, pupils with SEND make strong progress. Precise interventions led by knowledgeable staff support pupils to develop skills and understanding in aspects of their learning which they find difficult. Vulnerable pupils with significant needs are exceptionally well supported to make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Higher proportions of pupils are now reaching age-related expectations than have done so previously. Teachers have a secure understanding of what is expected at each stage of a child's learning journey. At the end of key stage 1, outcomes are now in line with or just above national averages. Although they are improving strongly, outcomes remain just below national averages at the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who are assessed as working at greater depth has increased year on year in key stage 1. Increases can also be seen in key stage 2, particularly in reading and writing. Across the school, some pupils are not challenged or supported to reach higher standards. Leaders continue to work with staff to ensure that there are high expectations of every pupil.

### Early years provision

### Outstanding

- Children start school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age, and in many cases well below. Skills are least developed in communication, language and literacy and in the children's understanding of the world. Children make strong progress. They benefit from a high-quality learning environment inside and out. This, coupled with high expectations from all adults, ensures that every child thrives and enjoys a very positive start to school.
- Over the last three years, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. Standards of current children are comparable with national expectations. This represents very strong progress from children's low starting points.
- The shared leadership of the early years is outstanding. Sharing provides additional capacity and ensures sustainability and consistency. Leaders bring a wealth of experience as well as an enthusiasm and a passion for early years education. They have a clear view about the provision's strengths and how to further develop it to ensure the best outcomes for children. Developments are based on an in-depth knowledge and an excellent understanding of how young children learn and develop.
- Information on children's progress is gathered constantly and used effectively to plan a curriculum that is interesting and engaging as well as appropriate to children's needs. Adults know how to respond to individual learning needs, including those of boys and children that are disadvantaged. Children's work in the class 'floor books' demonstrates their absolute joy in learning as well as the breadth of the curriculum.
- Support for pupils with significant needs is highly effective. Adults display patience and a depth of understanding of the individual needs of each child. They are skilled in using

each child's interests to maintain a focus on learning. As a result, children make sustained progress and secure key skills.

- The quality of teaching across the Nursery and the Reception classes is exceptionally good. Adults demonstrate an excellent knowledge of young children's learning and are highly skilled in asking questions to deepen children's understanding. Adult intervention is well timed and enables children to extend their knowledge, building on what they can do already. From the start, children are encouraged to explore, think and discover.
- Communication and talk are exceptionally well developed by every member of staff. Adults provide a commentary on the learning taking place and model the vocabulary for children to copy and practise. Despite limited language skills on entry to school, children quickly begin to develop confidence and acquire the vocabulary to express themselves clearly. Children speak in sentences to adults and their peers.
- The importance placed on fostering reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as mathematical skills is very evident. Skilful phonics teaching by all adults ensures that children learn to read and write quickly. Regular opportunities are built across all areas of learning for children to write, practise their letters and sounds and use numbers in all that they do.
- Children make excellent progress in their writing. Adults explicitly model how to write in simple sentences. They remind children about using full stops, capital letters and when to leave a finger space. Adults provide suitable prompts and scaffolds for children to use. Over time, children progress from writing simple word phrases to extended pieces of writing based on traditional tales such as 'The Gingerbread Man' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Children quickly develop the skills to write independently. Literacy skills are developed exceptionally well across the early years. As a result, children are very well prepared for the move into Year 1.
- Relationships are very strong. Children play and cooperate well with each other. They share equipment and notice what their friends are doing. They build positive relationships with the adults who teach them. Adults and children laugh, listen and learn together.
- Safeguarding is effective and all statutory welfare requirements are met. Children's health, safety and well-being are central to the early years provision. Adults are constantly vigilant.
- Adults communicate regularly with parents. They tell parents how well their children are doing and the progress they are making. Regular workshops support parents in knowing how best to help their child at home. Parents know they can talk to a teacher if they have any concerns or worries about their child. Home-school links are strong. Comments, such as 'my child is really flying since starting school', reflect the confidence parents have in the school.

## School details

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Unique reference number | 103324     |
| Local authority         | Birmingham |
| Inspection number       | 10058649   |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Primary  |
| School category                     | Maintained   |
| Age range of pupils                 | 3 to 11  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 708  |
| Appropriate authority               | The governing body   |
| Chair                               | Zaid Ahmed   |
| Headteacher                         | Gurjit Shergill  |
| Telephone number                    | 0121 6757702   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.arden.bham.sch.uk">www.arden.bham.sch.uk</a>         |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:enquiry@arden.bham.sch.uk">enquiry@arden.bham.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 2–3 July 2013  |

## Information about this school

- Arden Primary School is a much larger school than the average primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of Asian or Asian British Pakistani heritage, with the others coming from various other minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The early years provision consists of two part-time Nursery classes and three full-time Reception classes. This year, for the first time, the school has offered 30-hour places

for families with nursery-aged children.

- A new headteacher was appointed in April 2018. She was one of the substantive deputy headteachers at the school. The other deputy headteacher left the school in December 2018. This post is currently being advertised and temporarily filled by a deputy seconded from another local authority school.
- Due to financial difficulties, 13 support staff were made redundant in September 2018.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders. A separate meeting was held with five members of teaching and non-teaching staff. The lead inspector spoke with two governors, including the chair of governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors made visits to classrooms on both days of the inspection. Most of these visits were with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide selection of pupils' books from across the curriculum.
- Pupils were spoken to formally and informally. A group of pupils met with an inspector. Inspectors heard pupils read. They observed behaviour in classrooms, in corridors, and outside on the playgrounds.
- Inspectors also spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered letters written to the lead inspector. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan and records of monitoring. Minutes of governors' meetings and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed and discussed with leaders.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and inspectors looked at published information on the school's website.

## Inspection team

|                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Nicola Harwood, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Heather Phillips               | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Graeme Rudland                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Amarjit Cheema                 | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Lois Kelly                     | Ofsted Inspector        |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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