

# Clacton County High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115360
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338575
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Abbott HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1717
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	338
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr H A Foster
<b>Principal</b>	Mr J Brindle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Walton Road Clacton-on-Sea Essex
<b>Telephone number</b>	01255 424266
<b>Fax number</b>	01255 473174
<b>Email address</b>	admin@countyhigh.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 49 lessons, examined students' work and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students, the school's local authority adviser and its school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring records, equality schemes, community cohesion plans, child protection policy and safeguarding records. They also examined the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation and read the questionnaire responses from 320 parents, 170 students and 105 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well the school monitors and evaluates its work
- the effectiveness of action to tackle known weaknesses, especially in mathematics
- how well students with special educational needs are identified and supported, and the prevalence of exclusions for these students
- how well safeguarding reflects the school's context
- how well the school helps students to understand their own and other cultures.

## Information about the school

Clacton County High School is a large secondary school with specialist arts status. The specialist subjects are art, drama and English. The school is part of the informal Coastal Federation of local secondary schools and the Clacton Sixth Form Consortium. Sixth form numbers have grown in recent years.

A very large majority of students are of White British origin. Nearly a third of Key Stages 3 and 4 students have identified special educational needs, mostly moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is close to the national average. The number of looked after children attending the school is high.

The school holds the Sports Mark and Arts Mark awards.

**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?**

**4**

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

**3**

### Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to attainment in mathematics, the quality of teaching, the management of behaviour and the provision for students with special educational needs.

The school leaders and managers have made satisfactory progress in embedding ambition and driving improvement in the school. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that nearly all staff are proud to work at the school and feel that they know what the school is trying to achieve. The school has satisfactory arrangements for monitoring and evaluation and appropriate strategies for tackling the weaknesses that have been identified, such as those in mathematics. The school improvement plan is linked very clearly to the use of resources. Senior leaders have acted appropriately on the issues they have identified, and have achieved some improvements, notably in expanding the curriculum and accelerating students' progress. They have established a new faculty management structure, which has energised middle leaders and made them more accountable. They have also established a 'quality of learning' team which is helping to share good practice. The school's specialist status is reflected well in the curriculum and the specialist subjects are leaders in teaching and learning. Recent developments include a wider range of opportunities for students aged 14 to 19 and better monitoring of the performance of groups of students. In these respects the school shows satisfactory capacity to improve.

Nevertheless, the senior leadership team has not recognised significant weaknesses in the school's management of behaviour and its provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Governors hold the school to account well in many respects, but they have not questioned the high figures on exclusion, which show that students with special educational needs are far more likely to receive a fixed-term exclusion than those without special educational needs and that students with a statement of special educational needs are even more likely to be excluded. Governance is therefore judged to be inadequate.

The support for students with learning or behavioural difficulties is variable. For example, the monitoring of students with special educational needs is not well recorded; teaching assistants do not provide enough support tailored to individual needs and individual behaviour plans are not reviewed often enough. In addition, the repeated use of isolation and exclusion for students with behavioural difficulties shows that progress

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made in addressing their needs is also variable. Behaviour and learning support are managed separately and there is insufficient coordination between the two, especially in respect of those students that the school recognises as having both learning and behavioural difficulties.

Examination results in recent years indicate that progress has been good in English, but satisfactory and declining in mathematics. Taking all subjects into account, progress has been satisfactory. The school's own assessments show that current students are close to meeting some of the school's ambitious targets for the cohort as a whole. However, some groups are still some way short of their targets. These include looked after children, students with special educational needs and students with poor attendance. In addition, learning and progress were inadequate in a significant minority of lessons seen during the inspection. Students' achievement is therefore judged to be satisfactory.

Attainment in mathematics is judged to be low because GCSE results are consistently below average. The quality of learning in mathematics is not good enough to support the school's view that standards are improving. The work in students' books shows that topics are often covered superficially and there is little evidence of activities or teaching strategies that might help students to understand the subject better.

There are no consistent patterns of underachievement among groups monitored by the school, except for students who are frequently absent. However, the school does not monitor students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as a separate group. The school received a new analysis of 2009 results during the inspection, which showed considerable academic underachievement among the small minority of students in this category. This is a concern because the proportion of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is more than twice as high in other year groups.

Too much teaching seen during the inspection was inadequate. The school's own observations suggested that the quality of teaching would usually be good and rarely inadequate. Teaching is good in the specialist subjects, but overall, good and outstanding teaching and learning was seen in a minority of lessons. In several lessons seen during the inspection there were inadequacies in teaching and assessment, which slowed progress and sometimes led to low-level disruption. Students are not given enough guidance on how well they are doing or how they can improve. While inspectors saw some examples of good assessment and feedback, they also found classes where students' work had not been marked for some time.

While most students behave well, the high number of fixed-term exclusions and referrals to the school's inclusion unit demonstrate that unacceptable behaviour is a regular occurrence. Students' progress is inhibited in too many lessons by inattention or disruptive behaviour. Nearly a quarter of the 170 students who completed questionnaires felt that behaviour was not good and a similar proportion of the 103 staff respondents felt that behaviour was not well managed. For these reasons, behaviour is inadequate. The school's discipline policy applies similar sanctions for offences of widely differing seriousness, and is perceived as unfair by some students and parents.

There are some good opportunities for reflection in the specialist subjects of art, drama and English, but the spiritual elements are not always made explicit. Students are given

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satisfactory support to understand their own and other cultures and there are very few incidents of racial intolerance. Religious education lessons are being reinstated in Key Stage 4 and students take a GCSE short course in citizenship. However, the time allocated to form tutor periods is not always used well.

The biggest strength in students' personal development is their contribution to the school and wider community. Some students take on responsibility in the school and year councils; others are involved in sports leadership, charity fundraising or work with the school's 'quality of learning' team. The school's specialist status is reflected in the number of students who are involved in highly regarded musical and dramatic performances. Students' attendance improved in 2008 but fell back last year, and it remains too low. However, the school has worked hard to reduce persistent absence among students.

There are clear policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of students. A number of governors have completed training on safer recruitment. Child protection policy is clear and staff training is up to date. The school pays close attention to health and safety issues and its risk assessments are exemplary. The safeguarding and care for looked after children are good. They attend well and achieve satisfactorily. Students who are excluded from school for more than three days attend a support unit in the local community. The unit provides reports on the students who attend and they often enjoy the experience, but the school has not evaluated its impact on improving behaviour.

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

- Improve the provision and outcomes for students with special educational needs, particularly those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties by:
  - developing alternatives to exclusion for managing the behaviour of students with special educational needs
  - ensuring that learning support staff are deployed in ways that focus on improving outcomes for students
  - monitoring the day to day progress of each student with learning or behavioural difficulties
  - ensuring that the learning support and behavioural support functions are coherently linked for each student
  - strengthening the oversight of these functions by senior leaders.
- Develop and apply a rewards and sanctions policy that is perceived as fair by students, staff and parents.
- Raise attendance to at least 92%.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - identifying and addressing specific areas of weakness, paying particular attention to the teaching in underperforming subjects and the teaching of students with learning and/or behavioural difficulties

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- ensuring that assessment information is used to identify and address students' learning needs and that all students get guidance on how to improve their work
- ensuring that lessons provide students with opportunities to think for themselves.
- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
  - reducing the amount of time that students spend listening to teachers, so they can do more work themselves
  - setting a greater variety of problems on each topic, including more that go beyond routine single step exercises, so students develop a deeper understanding
  - devising a strategy to improve teachers' subject expertise so that mathematics is consistently taught in ways that promote understanding.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****4**

Outcomes are judged inadequate because behaviour is inadequate. In addition, attendance is too low and attainment in mathematics is not high enough.

The prior attainment of students varies between different year-groups, but is generally below the national average. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3, but this is not always sustained in Key Stage 4. In 2008, after two years of improvement, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics was close to the national average, and English results were above average. However, results declined in 2009. Overall attainment is average, but mathematics results have been consistently below average in each of the last four years. This weakness, affecting a major subject, means that attainment is judged to be low. One way the school has responded is to enter some students for GCSE mathematics in year 10. However it is too early to tell how much this will affect results for the year group as a whole.

Since 2006, there has been a trend of improvement in progress made by students between the ages of 11 and 16. Indeed progress was better in 2009 even though GCSE results dropped back below average. Nevertheless, the quality of learning seen during the inspection was not as good as had been seen in the school's own lesson observations for the last year. For this reason, inspectors judged that learning and progress is satisfactory.

Until this inspection, the progress of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties has not been monitored separately by the school, but analysis of 2009 results provided some information. Of the twelve students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, six made the progress expected of them in mathematics and English and three more made the expected progress in English. Many were involved in alternative programmes with most developing some work related skills and some gaining vocational qualifications. However, each student gained fewer qualifications than the average for similar students across the country. The progress of other students with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

All students in Years 7 to 11 have two hours of physical education, and around half are involved in extra-curricular sports. Students know the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, but the school's healthy eating and stop-smoking campaigns have not always been well supported. Nearly all of the students interviewed during the inspection said that they felt safe in school, but a minority of those who completed questionnaires disagreed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

In the minority of lessons where teaching and learning were good or outstanding, the teachers used assessment very well to adapt their teaching to different students' needs. Students enjoyed these lessons and were motivated to learn because their teachers challenged them to think for themselves at times but also gave them clear guidance on how to improve their work. These features were much less apparent in other lessons, where students often became restless because they had to listen for long periods. Assessment was inconsistent and the planning for these lessons did not address the full range of students' learning needs. Some teaching and learning was inadequate because

<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.



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the learning objectives were unclear and the tasks set for pupils were inappropriate or lacked challenge, resulting in a slow pace of learning.

Teachers are provided with profiles of each student with additional needs, which include individualised targets and some suggested strategies for the classroom. They are expected to identify subject specific targets for these students, but do so inconsistently. In many lessons observed during the inspection, there was insufficient attention to diagnosing students' subject specific difficulties and little indication of how different needs would be met. More generally, while good assessment was the key to the three outstanding lessons, the use of assessment was inadequate overall.

The curriculum has been enhanced since the last inspection by offering a wider range of qualifications to meet students' differing needs. This has contributed to students' improving progress and is also reflected in the increasing proportion of students continuing their education post-16 or securing employment or training. A creative and media diploma course is to be introduced next year, reflecting the school's specialist areas. Local employment patterns are reflected in the travel and tourism diploma that is being planned for 2011. In general, not enough is done to help students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties to improve. However, in Key Stage 4, some students benefit from alternative provision, such as placements and courses at local college.

Some aspects of care, guidance and support are good, including induction for new students and guidance on options. Parents receive regular reports on progress but some are concerned that the school does not always respond to their enquiries and concerns. There are strong links with other agencies to support vulnerable children and the school cares for looked after children well. Students, parents and staff all raised concerns about the management of behaviour, which many perceive to be unfair. Inspectors agree that sanctions are not always proportionate. The inadequate support for students with learning or behavioural difficulties means that care, guidance and support is inadequate.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The leadership of teaching and learning is satisfactory because the new 'quality of learning' team is beginning to have some impact. The team is largely drawn from the school's specialist subjects, where some of the best teaching is evident. Effective classroom teachers are coaching some of their colleagues. The team also takes into

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account students' views and facilitates opportunities for teachers to observe each other. Inspectors conducted three joint observations with senior managers and these were accurately evaluated by the school observers. However, there was a significant difference between the quality of teaching seen during the inspection and that observed by the school during the last year. This is partly because inspectors observed more of the more challenging classes and weaker subjects, but the extent of inadequate teaching is too large to ignore.

Senior leaders have not been fully effective in tackling the weaknesses in the provision for students with learning or behavioural difficulties. Oversight of this area of provision lacks rigour and there is insufficient coordination between the special needs department and the inclusion unit. The learning support assistants are dedicated and committed to improving outcomes for students but the school does not ensure that their time is put to best use.

The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion accurately and has identified that it needs to develop its response to the religious dimension. Equal opportunities policies meet statutory requirements. The school monitors the performance of different groups and has had some impact in tackling underachievement where it has been identified. However, the monitoring does not distinguish between students with learning difficulties and those with behavioural difficulties.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

**Sixth form**

The leadership and management of the sixth form has had a good impact on expanding

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the curriculum and improving progress, but only satisfactory impact on teaching and learning and raising attainment. There are good partnership arrangements for 14-19 education and participation is increasing. Since the sixth form became part of the Clacton Consortium, students have had many more courses to choose from. Because the courses are now better matched to students' needs, progress in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving, though their average attainment in A levels remains low. The curriculum has many good features, but there is no meaningful provision for religious education and outcomes in general studies examinations are disappointing. Of 29 students in the sixth form who completed questionnaires, 28 agreed with the statement 'I learn a lot in lessons'. Nevertheless, good teaching was seen in only four of the ten sixth form lessons observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory because although students make satisfactory progress, they are not challenged to think for themselves often enough or to develop effective skills of analysis, evaluation and criticism.

Students are guided well on their post-16 options and care, support and guidance for sixth formers is generally good. However, tutor periods are not always well attended.

*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

**Views of parents and carers**

In all, 320 parental questionnaires were received, of which two thirds related to students in Key Stage 3 and very few to sixth form students. Around one in ten questionnaires had written comments that raised concerns about bullying, behaviour, or unfair discipline. Inspectors agreed with parents' concerns about behaviour and the discipline system.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clacton County High School 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 320 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1717 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	24	212	66	21	7	7	2
The school keeps my child safe	76	24	215	67	15	5	4	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	73	23	206	65	28	9	7	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	87	27	195	61	25	8	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	69	22	222	70	13	4	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	16	198	62	45	14	9	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	13	215	67	41	13	6	2
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)	61	19	211	66	21	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	67	21	222	70	16	5	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	21	188	59	32	10	15	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	13	189	59	34	11	14	4
The school is led and managed effectively	66	21	214	67	14	4	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95	30	190	60	20	6	8	3

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupil's 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.**



22 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Clacton County High School, CO15 6DZ

Thank you on behalf of the inspection team for the help you gave us during the inspection. We talked to several groups of you. We also surveyed 170 students and found that most agreed that they learn a lot in lessons, adults care about them and explain how to improve their work, and that the school helps them to prepare for the future. However, nearly a quarter said that behaviour was not good and a similar number felt that the school did not help them to be healthy.

The inspection found that the school has several strengths.

Over the last few years, students have been making better progress in the main school and the sixth form.

Some of the teaching is good, particularly in the school's specialist subjects of art, drama and English.

The range of courses you can take has been improved through partnerships with other schools and colleges.

The school works hard to keep you safe by carefully checking the adults who work with you and by making sure that staff are well trained in child protection.

The guidance that you receive when you join the school or select your options is good. More of you are continuing your education beyond Year 11 and more sixth formers are entering higher education.

Many of you make a strong contribution to the school and wider community.

The inspection team also identified some areas where improvement is needed.

Students with special educational needs, and especially those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, are not supported well enough.

The rewards and punishments system is considered unfair by some students and parents and needs to be reviewed.

Too much teaching and assessment is not of a high enough standard.

The results in GCSE mathematics are not good enough.

We have given the school a notice to improve. This means it will be revisited by

inspectors to check on progress. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott

Her Majesty's Inspector



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