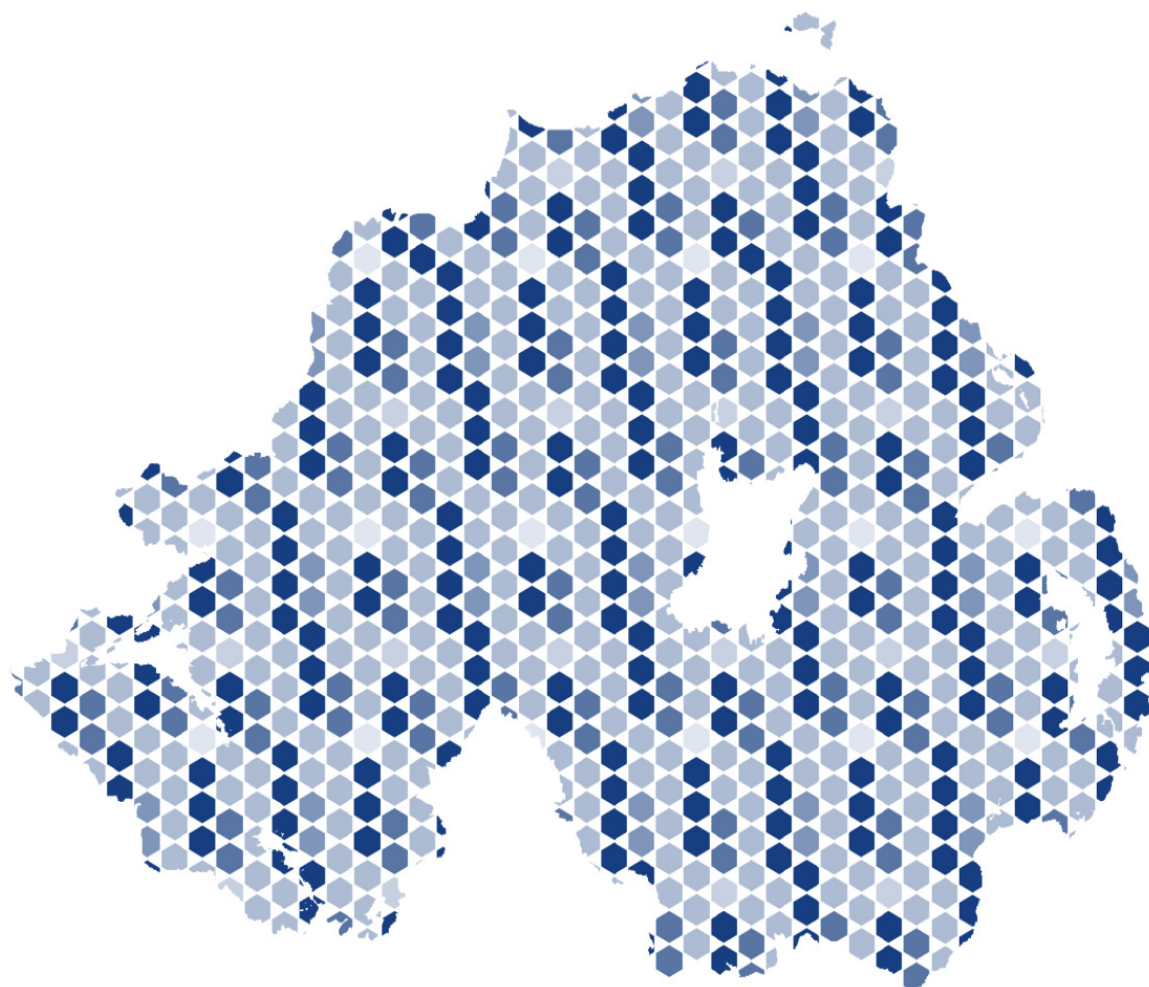


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Michael's College,
Enniskillen

Report of an Inspection
in January 2011

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION	1
3. THE VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL	2
4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION	3
5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
6. CONCLUSION	6
APPENDICES	

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Michael's College is a Voluntary Grammar School for boys situated on the outskirts of Enniskillen. The current enrolment is 718 pupils. There are 217 boys in the sixth form, around 30 of whom transfer from the local non-selective schools. The enrolment has remained stable over the past three years. The school draws its pupils from a wide range of primary schools in the town and rural areas within an approximate 25 mile radius; the school has identified almost 13% of the pupils as requiring additional support with their learning, with a small number having a specific statement of educational need. About 9% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals.

1.2 FOCUS OF THE INSPECTION¹

The inspection focused on:

- achievements and standards;
- learning and teaching;
- curriculum provision across a wide range of subjects with a particular focus in English, mathematics, and history; and
- leadership and management at all levels across the school.

The inspection also focused on the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; progress towards the Entitlement Framework (EF) and the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum; and the approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. In addition, there was a short specialist visit to Music which contributed to the overall inspection findings. The views of the pupils, parents, teachers, support staff and governors were taken into account in the inspection.

2. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

2.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the motivated and respectful pupils, whose behaviour and engagement in their learning during the inspection was exemplary;
- the conscientious and caring teachers, and the quality of teaching observed, most of which was good or very good;

¹ The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in post-primary schools are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

- the high standards achieved at General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level and the improving attainment at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level;
- the very good, coherent and inclusive provision for all aspects of the care, guidance and support, and the contribution which each makes to the quality of the pupils' achievements;
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities that enrich the academic and social development of the pupils; and
- the highly effective, cohesive leadership across the school supported appropriately by the Principal and the Board of Governors to effect improvements in the outcomes attained by the boys.

2.2 An area for improvement is:

- the need to develop further, more consistent approaches to the use of assessment of the pupils' learning in some subjects, in order to ensure that the needs of all of the pupils are addressed fully and their attainments raised.

A summary of the main findings for the specialist subject areas under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

3. THE VIEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL

3.1 The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, teachers and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8, 10, 12, 13 and 14².

3.2 Most of the parental responses from the questionnaires were positive, indicating strong support for almost all aspects of the work and life of the school. The written responses from the parents indicated that most of the parents regard highly the careers guidance provided for the pupils and they were complimentary about the strong academic and pastoral support provided by the teachers. A small number of the parents who responded expressed concern that the range of subject choices available at GCE A Level is limited. A few responses indicated dissatisfaction with information made available during a recent closure of the school caused by bad weather.

3.3 Almost all of the teachers' responses and most of their written comments reflect positively on the work and life of the school. Nearly all the teachers stated that they feel valued by the Principal and management and they endorsed the positive working atmosphere of the school. A small number of teachers did not agree that there is effective communication across staff at all levels.

² The number of questionnaires issued and returned, and the number containing written comments are shown in appendix 2.

3.4 The governors mentioned the positive ethos and exemplary behaviour of the pupils. They praised, in particular, the effective leadership and commitment shown collectively by the senior leadership team (SLT), and the high quality of pastoral care shown by the staff. They commended the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and the school's high standing within the local community.

3.5 The pupils talked enthusiastically about the very good working relationships that they enjoy with their peers and their teachers. The pupils in year eight value highly the very good support they received from their teachers and the older pupils during their first year in the school. All of the pupils are fully aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

3.6 The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the few areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

Almost all of the pupils, across the key stages, demonstrate good levels of academic achievement and develop well socially as a result of the effective teaching and the very good learning support. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, drama and after schools clubs enriches the academic and social development of the pupils.

During the inspection, all of the pupils observed were highly motivated, willing to learn and engaged well in their lessons, and particularly so in music and mathematics. They were co-operative and supported one another both in and out of class. The pupils, including those identified with special educational needs and those with significant challenges, often associated with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), demonstrate continuous improvement in their learning. The majority of the pupils for whom learning support is provided, achieve in line with or above their abilities. As a result of whole school strategies and the interventions made, all of the pupils with statements of educational need progressed last year to their chosen course at University.

At GCSE the pupils' achievement at grades A*-C in at least seven subjects, including English and mathematics, is in line with the average for similar selective schools. Three-quarters of the subjects at GCSE level at grades A*-B are either within or above five percentage points of the respective Northern Ireland (NI) average.

The percentage of pupils achieving grades A-C in three or more GCE A Levels is in line with the NI average over the past three years. Over the same period two-thirds of the subjects are five percentage points or more above the respective NI average at grades A-C. In 2010 the pupils achieved a high standard at A Level in the subject areas under focus. The pupils achieved a high standard in a small number of applied courses offered at post-16 level.

More detail of the results achieved in public examinations can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good.

4.2.1 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of the teaching in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding with most lessons observed being good or very good. In the lessons observed, the learning intentions were made clear and, in a significant minority of instances, good account was taken of the pupils' prior learning. In the most effective practice, the teachers engaged the pupils through effective questioning that elicited extended responses and developed their thinking skills. The pupils benefitted from paired and group activities which heightened their participation in class. In the less effective practice the use of formative assessment approaches, including peer and self-assessment, is not consistent across all of the subjects. In the case of music, where a specialist visit was made, the provision and outcomes were very good.

The SLT has introduced recently an intervention programme designed to address the specific needs of those pupils identified as underachieving through the effective analysis of data for tracking individual pupils, and has produced detailed advice to guide class teaching. In addition, a further 9% of the pupils have been identified as gifted and talented and in need of extra challenge. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has also put in place challenging extension activities and programmes for these more able pupils.

With the exception of a small number of subjects, including music where ICT was well used to enhance the teaching, ICT is generally not well embedded to support learning. Further action has been identified, as a whole school priority, in order to enhance its use to support learning across the curriculum more generally and to promote further the pupils' digital skills. Information and communication technology is well used by management to effect whole school improvement through the collection and generation of useful quantitative data and to maintain accurate record systems.

4.2.2 CURRICULUM PROVISION

All pupils study ten subjects at GCSE level, including English, English Literature, mathematics and religious education. A large number of optional subjects is offered including science, modern languages, history and geography. Of the nineteen subjects on offer at key stage (KS) 4, only three are applied courses. The SLT intends to introduce single award, applied science at KS4 for the forthcoming academic year. Currently there is no collaboration with the local area learning community (ALC) to expand the programme at KS4. The school needs to monitor and develop its programme if it is to ensure that it is broad and balanced and will meet the requirements of the EF at KS4.

A strong feature of the sixth-form curriculum is the effective promotion of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) agenda, with a particularly high uptake of mathematics at GCE A level. The school is making good progress, post-16, in preparing for the implementation of the EF and has introduced seven vocational A levels. There is good uptake, in particular, for Construction and Applied ICT. Currently 22 subjects are offered at post-16.

There are well-established links with the other selective schools in the area for the delivery of a small number of GCE A level subjects and a very small number of pupils study Performing Arts in another school. There is a collaborative timetable organised by the Fermanagh Learning Community; the school reports however, that few of the pupils show an interest in the courses offered by other providers in the Fermanagh Learning Community.

In order to address more fully the individual needs of all of the pupils at KS4 and post-16, it is important for the SLT to focus on the appropriateness of its offer and to ensure a broad and balanced programme comprising a mix of academic and vocational subjects.

4.2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The highly effective head of pastoral care is well respected by all of the staff and the pupils. Throughout the school there is a caring and supportive ethos which is evident in the very good working relationships between the pupils and the teachers which support effectively their development as learners. The community-based extra-curricular activities include the very good opportunities for the pupils to represent their school and participate in community relations programmes. The personal development programme delivered by form teachers is well planned and evaluated robustly, and is meeting effectively the needs of the pupils. The school has identified low attendance as an issue in years 13 and 14, and is developing appropriate strategies.

4.2.4 SAFEGUARDING

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

4.2.5 CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The overall quality of the CEIAG provision is very good. The dedicated Head of Careers, supported by a team of careers teachers, has established a comprehensive careers education programme throughout the school. A very well structured guidance programme, facilitated by the careers teachers, provides individual interviews for all pupils and impartial advice at the key transitional stages. In addition, the school has established meaningful links with a wide range of employers and education providers, which help prepare the pupils for the world of work. The careers department is well supported by the SLT and there is good monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on CEIAG within most subjects and STEM careers are promoted well.

4.2.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the annual healthy lifestyle week and strong focus on sporting opportunities, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The Principal is in his fifth year in post; he creates a suitable environment for whole school development and sets a positive tone for the life and work of the school. He is committed to continuous improvement and to meeting the needs of all of the pupils. He is supported well by the governors and the SLT.

5.2 The strategic leadership of the school is distributed across the SLT comprising the Principal, two vice-principals, three senior teachers and the bursar. Roles and responsibilities are clear and senior leadership, working as a cohesive team, is highly effective in dealing with the challenges facing the school.

5.3 The school has devised a three-year development plan which sets out the main priorities for development. A baseline position has been established and suitable action plans have been drawn up. Important whole school issues are taken forward by the SLT who are supported well in this work by the heads of department. Progress to date has been good and the outcomes are monitored robustly.

5.4 Key priority areas identified by the school include the need to raise the standards of achievement in literacy at KS3 and tackling underachievement at GCSE level. A series of effective strategies have been introduced to address these issues. Diagnostic testing is used well to determine a baseline position, from which subject targets for learning are set, pupil improvement is monitored and progress reviewed regularly. A strong impetus is provided by the Learning Support Team to drive forward improvements in learning, in particular with those pupils experiencing difficulties.

5.5 A system of peer mentoring and guidance complements this programme. The SENCO has developed strategically with the staff a shared ownership and a good understanding of the special and additional educational needs of the pupils which makes a positive difference to their progress.

5.6 There is effective use of pupil performance data and management information for identifying strengths in provision, targeting under-achievement and maintaining accurate record systems. A well-embedded culture of self-evaluation has been developed successfully within the school. Subject departments are involved in bringing about improvement in pupil experiences and outcomes. Useful audits and evaluations of schemes of work and policies are carried out across subjects and departmental plans devised. Although the Principal meets annually with the heads of department to review progress across each subject area, clearer linkages are required between middle and senior management.

5.7 A small number of departments are receiving particular attention in an attempt to raise pupil performance. The governors recognise their challenge function and have adopted an active role in order to support the Principal and the teachers to concentrate collectively on raising standards of achievement for all of the pupils. The governors have established appropriately a sub-committee to monitor examination results.

5.8 The school deploys its financial resources to good effect; the bursar provides very good support to the governors and SLT.

6. CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE AREAS UNDER FOCUS

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is very good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the motivated boys who engage well in learning and achieve high standards, particularly in GCSE and GCE mathematics;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or very good;
- the ongoing review and development of schemes which guide effectively the work of the department;
- the effective use of available data to set targets for, and track the progress of, individual boys;
- the assiduous work of the departmental team who demonstrate a commitment to improving the quality of the provision; and
- the very good leadership provided by the head of mathematics.

History

The quality of provision in history is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very positive working relationships between the pupils and the teachers;
- the pupils' engagement, enthusiasm and interest in history;
- the hard work, collegiality and commitment to improvement demonstrated by the teachers;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was very good;
- the very good standards achieved by the pupils in history at GCE A level; and
- the effective leadership provided by the Head of Department.

The area for improvement is:

- to develop further the process of self-evaluation in order to raise standards at GCSE level.

English

The quality of provision in English is good.

The strengths of the work include:

- the quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was good or very good;
- the improvement in standards at GCSE and the very good standards achieved at GCE A Level;
- the good start made to developing and revising schemes of work;
- the good use of quantitative data to inform planning and target underachievement; and
- the very effective leadership of the head of department.

The areas for improvement are:

- the need for a sharper focus on differentiation in planning and schemes of work in order to improve the standards at GCSE, in particular in English Literature.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued	150
Number of Questionnaires Returned	50
Percentage of Returns	33%
Number of Comments	28

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	46
Number of Comments	14

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	32
Number of Comments	6

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: St Michael's College v. Date of Inspection: W/C 17/01/11
 ii. School Reference Number: 242-0043 vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 8 Intake	101	101	100	102	102
Total enrolment	708	712	715	719	718

1.3 Attendance

Year 20098/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2009/10	NI Average 2008/09
% Attendance	94.8	93.6	91.8	92.9	92.3	91.2	89.6	92	95

1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:	46.909	iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):	0.812
ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):	15.306		

Year 2010/11	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	102	100	100	100	99	121	96	718
Enrolment: Total	102	100	100	100	99	121	96	718
PTR	18.086	17.731	17.591	13.54	13.205	15.447	13.28	

1.5 Staying On Rate (2008/09) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	121	NI Av Year 13	92.6
Year 14	98	NI Av Year 14	86.4

1.6 Leavers' Destinations

2008/09	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	8		108	
Another School	0%	24.1	3%	1.3
Employment	0%	3	7%	3.4
Full-time Further Education	88%	58.9	8%	9.5
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	79%	82.8
Full-time Training	0%	6.4	2%	0.4
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.7	0%	1
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	13%	5.9	1%	1.6

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: St Michael's College, Enniskillen

SCHOOL YEAR: 2010/2011

GCSE	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE and Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	94	97.98	97.92
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including English and Mathematics	92	88.89	94.79
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	89	92.93	91.67
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including English and Mathematics	88	86.87	90.63
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A levels	79.35	82	77.89
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A levels	98.91	98	97.89

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and GCE subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2010, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

Table 1

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-B	German Religious Studies	Drama Irish	Art and Design Business Studies Chemistry Double Award Science 1st Subject English English Literature French Geography Mathematics Music Physics	Additional Mathematics Biology History Sport (PE) Studies	Design and Technology
GCSE A*-C	German	French Religious Studies	Art and Design Biology Business studies Chemistry Double Award Science 1st Subject Drama English Geography History Irish Mathematics Music Physics	Additional Mathematics Design and Technology English Literature Sport (PE) Studies	
GCE A Level A-C	Biology Chemistry French Mathematics Music Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	Design and Technology: Product Design English Literature Geography History Physics	Art and Design Business Studies German	Information Technology Irish Politics	

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

Table showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.

Table 2

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-B		Music	Drama History Mathematics Sport (PE) Studies	Additional Mathematics Art and Design Biology Chemistry Design and Technology English English Literature Geography Irish Physics Religious Studies	Business Studies Double Award Science 1st Subject French German
GCSE A*-C	Mathematics Music	Additional Mathematics Art and Design Biology Chemistry Design and Technology Double Award Science 1st Subject Drama English English Literature Geography History Irish Physics Religious Studies Sport (PE) Studies	Business Studies French German		
GCE A Level A-C		Art and Design Design and Technology German History Irish Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies	Biology Business Studies Chemistry English Literature French Geography Information Technology Physics	Design and Technology: Product Design Sport (PE) Studies	

NOTE: GCE A* grade applies from 2010.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AND/OR ACCOMMODATION

- The school needs to ensure that it complies fully with the circular 2004/5 (Class Sizes in Practical Subjects in Post-Primary Schools):
http://www.deni.gov.uk/class_sizes_in_practical_subjects_circular_2004_5.pdf

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