

St Matthew Academy

ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY Policy

St Matthew says '*let your light shine.*'

At St Matthew Academy we let our light shine by:

- Growing our inclusive, caring Catholic community
- Nurturing faith, discovering talents and cultivating ambition
- Transforming each other through integrity, courage and service

enabling everyone at St Matthew Academy to flourish.

Date of Approval	Autumn 2023
Date of Review	Autumn 2025

Aim

The Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring, Catholic environment, whereby each member of the Academy community feels wanted and secure. It is the aim of all staff at St Matthew Academy to work in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers to enable all pupils to achieve the best possible attendance and punctuality throughout the academic year.

St Matthew Academy by law will seek to ensure that all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) receive a full-time education. Section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996 says, "If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his (her) parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted". Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September – July).

The Academy has an expectation that over the course of an academic year a child's attendance will be 97% or more. Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the government as persistent absence.

Principles

The aim of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy reflects the aims and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils and staff. There is a clear link between poor attendance and lower academic achievement.

Objectives

- To improve the overall percentage attendance of pupils at the Academy.
- To encourage pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending regularly.
- To provide an effective and efficient system for monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- To recognise the external factors which influence pupils' attendance and work with parents/carers to address difficulties.
- To implement a system of rewards and sanctions to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To promote effective partnerships with other Services and External Agencies where appropriate to promote good attendance.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Procedures

Registration

St Matthew Academy by law have to register pupils twice a day; first thing in the morning at the start of the Academy day, and again in the afternoon session. If a pupil fails to attend or arrives late, they can be marked as absent for that session.

Secondary Phase

Form tutors will mark the registers during morning and afternoon tutor time.

Primary Phase

Class teachers will mark the registers within 20 minutes of the morning and afternoon sessions starting.

Understanding registration codes

A series of codes are used for each child and for each session. The codes are used by all schools so that reasons for absence can be easily and universally monitored. Each code will mean that the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorized absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Procedure for the Academy

Authorising or Authorising an Absence

If a pupil of compulsory Academy age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. Only the Academy Head Teacher, or designated staff, can authorise a pupil's absence.

Additional evidence such as proof of appointments, or letters from GP's confirming illness, may be required before an absence is authorised.

Authorised Absences are absence from mornings or afternoon sessions from the Academy due to:

- Leave agreed due to exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher
- Day of religious observance – officially set aside by the religious body, which the family belong.
- Medical/dental appointment – pupils should be absent only for a reasonable amount of time, necessary for them to attend the appointment.
- Genuine illness or a stay in hospital and/or consequent recuperation at home following medical treatment.
- Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause e.g. exceptionally bad weather coupled with the inability to arrive in school safely.
- Attending a family funeral (this must not however exceed an agreed period of absence).
- Suspension – will be recorded with code 'E.' A permanent exclusion will be treated as authorised absence until the child is removed from the school register

Unauthorised Absences are those that the Headteacher, or designated staff, do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence by the parent and can include:

- A shopping trip
- A birthday
- Attending a pop concert/football match
- Bad weather – too wet, too cold
- All session absence for a single short medical appointment;
- Lack of usual transport – the parent must demonstrate that every effort has been made to get the child to school safely;
- Taking a period of leave that has not been approved by the Headteacher
- Parent giving a reason which after investigation is found to be false; and
- Where no reason for the absence is given, the absence will be unauthorised

Leave during term time

Arrangements for Requesting Exceptional Leave of Absence

If you need to request 'leave' for a specific reason, then you must complete an 'Leave of Absence Request Form,' which is available via the school website. The request must be received by the Headteacher no later than 10 working days before the proposed leave is due to take place. Each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life.

If your request is refused and you decide to take your child/children out of school during term time, then you will be referred to the Local Authority who may decide to take legal action or issue a penalty fine. Unauthorised requests with the code (G). Leave taken without a formal request being made to the Headteacher will remain unauthorised even if the parent enters a request on returning from the holiday/leave.

Term Time Holidays

If authorisation is given, it is to the discretion of the Headteacher the length of leave authorised. Authorised requested will be coded (H).

Notes regarding exceptional circumstances:

- Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is not considered an exceptional circumstance
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside Academy hours. Pupils may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events

The legal framework-governing pupil's leave of absence from school during term time is set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Parent/Carer Responsibility

It is the parent/carers legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend the Academy where they are registered regularly. Once a child is registered at the Academy, attendance is compulsory until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which a child turns 16.

Procedure for parents

Absence due to illness (Not medical or dental)

If a pupil is unable to attend the Academy, parents/carers are expected:

- To contact the Academy before 8.30am on the first day of a pupil's absence by email, text or telephone. A reason for absence must be given and where possible, an expected date of return.
- To contact the Academy when the period of absence runs longer than originally advised giving a reason and new date of expected return to the Academy.
- To provide a letter (or written note in the pupil's planner) explaining the absence on the day the pupil returns to the Academy.

Medical evidence

The Academy may request medical evidence where there may be an ongoing or reoccurring illness that impact on a pupil's attendance. This to enable the school to make an informed decision to authorise the absence.

Persistent and Severely persistent absent pupils

Medical evidence may be also requested on the basis of persistent (below 90%) or severely persistent (below 50%) pupil, where historically poor attendance has been a concern in the past. These children are identified through weekly, half-termly and yearly monitoring. (*Working together to improve attendance Sept 2022*) This would also be part of the Safeguarding protocol

Concerns

Parents/carers should contact the Academy if they are concerned about their child's attendance, or if their child is experiencing difficulties either in or outside the Academy which are affecting their attendance. The Academy aims to work in partnership with parents/carers and will discuss ways to support a pupil and family to ensure improved attendance.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Wherever possible, parents/carers are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside Academy time. Where such appointments in Academy time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance if at all possible. A 'present' mark may still be awarded if the pupil attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day. Evidence of the appointment may be requested before the absence is authorised.

Punctuality

Primary Phase of the Academy

The Academy day starts at 8.50am. All pupils are expected to arrive at the Academy by 8.45am and go directly to their designated areas. Registration starts at 8.50. Pupils arriving after 9.00am will be recorded as late. Registers close at 9.45am. Those arriving after 9.45am will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

The procedures for late arrival are laid out below:

- If a pupil arrives after 8.57am but before the Primary gate closes, they will be recorded as late by a member of the Primary Senior Leadership Team.
- If a pupil arrives after the Primary gate has closed at 9.00am, they should sign in electronically at the Academy reception desk. They will then be escorted to their class.
- Pupils in Year 6 arriving late without a valid note or message from parents/carer will receive a lunchtime Time Out on the day of the lateness

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child arrives promptly. Parent/carers of pupils who arrive persistently late will be contacted and if no improvement is observed, further action will result.

Persistent lateness will be addressed in line with the Primary Phase Punctuality Protocol and could be referred to the Local Authority, which may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence.

Secondary Phase of the Academy

All pupils are expected to be at the Academy by 8.35am and go directly to their designated areas to line up. Pupils arriving after 8.35am will be recorded as late; Registers close at 9.45am. Those arriving after 9.45am will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

- If a pupil arrives after 8.40am they should sign in at the Academy reception electronically, get their planner stamped and proceed directly to their tutor group. They will be recorded as late by a member of the Secondary Senior Leadership Team.
- If a pupil arrives after 9.00am Academy reception staff will ensure they are signed in.
- Pupils arriving after 9.00am need a note or message from parent/carer explaining their late arrival

Late Detentions

- All pupil's lateness is monitored and recorded daily
- If a pupil accumulates three lates and more within a half term, they will receive a one-hour detention on the same day
- Further sanctions will be issued if a pupil continues to be late to the Academy including but exclusively lunchtime detentions or be placed in the Behaviour Support Room

- Pupils that are persistently late can be referred to the local authority who may consider issuing fixed penalty notices or legal proceeding.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child arrives promptly. Parent/carers of pupils who arrive persistently late will be contacted and if no improvement is observed, further action will result.

The Attendance Officer and the Director of Learning will address persistent lateness code (L) in the first instance. If there has been no improvement, parents will then be invited into school for a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

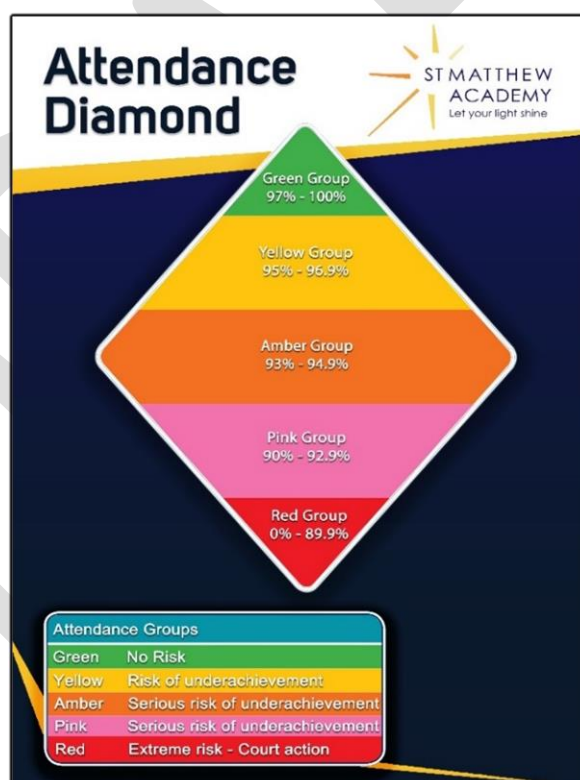
Persistent unauthorised lateness code (U) will be referred to the Local Authority and may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice as it is considered as an unauthorised absence.

Monitoring Attendance

Improving attendance is a whole Academy responsibility. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility including parents, pupils and all members of Academy staff.

The diagram below highlights the whole Academy approach to attendance monitoring and intervention.

The Academy has an escalating approach to reinforcing high levels of attendance and intervening in respect of attendance concerns.



Attendance and Safeguarding

The safeguarding of all pupils is of utmost importance. School provides a protective environment for those who attend. Schools are well placed to identify safeguarding issues early and regular attendance is vital for this. For those who don't attend regularly, and where all avenues of support have been facilitated, and the

appropriate educational support has been provided but the unauthorised absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, request that a full children's social care assessment is conducted. When a pupil is absent and no reason has been given for the absence, the school will prioritise the safety of these pupils. See '*Where the school is not notified of an absence*' below.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to its age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure his or her child receives that education.

Where parents have registered their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school

Working with families and partners

St Matthew Academy is committed to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This requires local partners to work collaboratively with families.

St Matthew Academy will work collaboratively to:

- Identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual, cohort and school level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- Ensure aspiration to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents by building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- Listen to families to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- Remove barriers in school where practically able and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Escalate concerns where the voluntary support is not having an impact by explaining the consequences of non-attendance clearly and ensuring support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- Enforce attendance through statutory interventions or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education where support is not having an impact or not being engaged with
- More details on roles and responsibilities can be found in appendix A
- The Academy will carry out regular register checks and contact parents/carers when a pupil's attendance or punctuality is under target. Parents/carers may be invited to attend meetings to the Academy to discuss issues affecting a pupil's attendance.

Each pupil will be considered individually before any action is taken. In the Primary phase of the Academy, actions will be agreed by the Academy Attendance Officer and the member of Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for attendance. In the Secondary phase of the Academy, actions will be agreed by the Academy Attendance Officer, Directors of Learning and member of the Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for attendance.

Attendance Legal Intervention

When it is found that parents fail to meet their responsibilities, Lewisham Attendance Service has the legal power to take one or more of the following approaches:

- Warning letter – clarifies the legal responsibility of the parent and the school expectation in relation to what the parent must do next.
- School Attendance Panel – Parent/s will be invited to meet with the school Attendance Officer and Lewisham Attendance Officer to sign a formal written agreement which will be reviewed within a specified timeframe. Appropriate support will be provided to parents by the school and/or the Lewisham Attendance Officer to meet the terms of the agreement.
- A Penalty Notice – may be issued for example, if your child has unauthorised absences, including taking unauthorised holiday in term time, if your child has unauthorised absences for 10 sessions or more in a twelve-week period or if the child is continually late for school. The fine is £60.00, paid by each adult with parental responsibility, for each child. If you have not paid the fine within 21 days, then the fine increases to £120.00 which must be paid within 21 days. There is no option to pay in instalments, the fine cannot be reduced if you are in receipt of benefits and there is no right of appeal. Fines are paid to the Local Authority.
- Prosecution – The Lewisham Attendance Service can prosecute parents if they fail to ensure that their child attends school.
- Parenting Order – this may be made by the court where a parent has been found guilty of an offence relating to school attendance, this requires each adult with parental responsibility to co-operate with conditions attached to the order to assist them in managing their child's overall behaviour and attendance.

Pupils who miss 10% of Academy days are called 'Persistent Absentees' by the Department for Education whatever the reason for their absence (authorised or unauthorised). Special procedures will be applied to pupils who fall into this category.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the matter being referred to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice to be issued or for investigation which could result in prosecution. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupils at the Academy. Magistrates can issue fines of up to £2,500 per pupils, impose Parenting Orders and impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

The legal framework governing Penalty Notices is set out in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, amended 2013.

Pupils whose attendance and punctuality is outstanding, or is most improved, will be recognised with certificates and considered for further rewards, which include trips, prizes and whole class or form treats.

Appendices:

Summary of Expectations

For ALL pupils:			
Parents / pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The Governing Body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.</p> <p>Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).</p> <p>Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.</p> <p>Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.</p>	<p>Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.</p> <p>Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.</p> <p>Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.</p> <p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance</p>	<p>Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.</p> <p>Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.</p> <p>Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.</p>	<p>Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.</p> <p>Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.</p> <p>Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.</p>

For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (95-90% attendance):

Parents/pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The Governing Body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.</p>	<p>Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.</p> <p>Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.</p> <p>If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.</p>

For persistently absent pupils (below 90% attendance):

Parents / pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The Governing body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.</p> <p>Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.</p> <p>Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:</p> <p>Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.</p> <p>Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.</p> <p>Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).</p>

For severely absent pupils (less than 50% attendance):			
Parents/pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The Governing Body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:</p> <p>All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.</p> <p>Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.</p>

For pupils with medical conditions and / or SEND with poor attendance (below 95%)

Parents/ pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The governing Body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered.</p>	<p>Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.</p> <p>Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.</p> <p>Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals.</p> <p>Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.</p>	<p>Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.</p> <p>Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.</p>

For pupils with a social worker:			
Parents/pupils are expected to:	The Academy is expected to:	The Governing Body is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
<p>Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.</p> <p>Proactively engage with the support offered</p>	<p>Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.</p>	<p>Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it</p>	<p>Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.</p> <p>Put in place personal education plans for looked-after children.</p> <p>Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after</p>

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