

Truro and Penwith College

General further education college

Inspection dates	23–26 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	College has not previously been inspected

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Governors and senior leaders have successfully created a culture where learning and achievement flourish as a result of excellent teaching.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, and, as a result, learners make exceptional progress, often well above their expectations and their qualifications on entry would predict.
- A high proportion of learners successfully gain their qualifications, and many of these achieve high grades.
- Learners develop a wide range of skills that prepare them exceptionally well for employment and further study.
- Support and care for learners are outstanding and are based on a strong mix of nurture and challenge.
- Learners have high aspirations as a result of exceptionally effective careers advice and guidance. A high proportion of learners go on to further or higher levels of study or into employment.
- Leaders and managers have secured excellent facilities and resources for learning that help learners make exceptional progress.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum is broad and accessible. The courses on offer meet local and regional needs well and prepare learners exceptionally well for employment or higher level study.
- Leaders and managers have maintained the strong financial position of the college to ensure that the curriculum is sustained and developed further.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Truro and Penwith College is a large tertiary college with two main sites in Truro and Penwith. The vast majority of learners are aged 16–19. Demand for places at the college has been high for several years and continues to grow among this age group. The college is designated as a teaching school and a mathematics hub and has established an academy trust supporting secondary and primary education in Cornwall.
- Truro College merged with the former Penwith College in 2008. The accommodation and facilities at the Penwith site have been exceptionally well developed to match those at Truro and now provide an excellent resource for this isolated region.
- The college draws learners from across Cornwall, a large rural area characterised by small and scattered centres of population, limited public transport, and high levels of socio-economic deprivation.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that adult learners and apprentices experience the same exceptionally high-quality teaching, learning and assessment enjoyed by 16–19-year-olds and those with high needs. Attendance at lessons for apprentices and adult learners should be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Governors, leaders and managers work relentlessly to ensure that learners experience outstanding teaching, learning and assessment. Learners enjoy great success because of the ethos of aspiration and achievement that pervades the college.
- The constant focus of senior leaders on teaching and learning leads to very high levels of achievement and enjoyment for learners. Major factors contributing to learners' excellent progress and success are the very high quality of the support given and the caring atmosphere of the college in which learners and staff thrive. Leaders and middle managers provide excellent resources that teachers and learners use imaginatively and extremely effectively in teaching and learning.
- In recent years, leaders and managers, supported by well-informed governors, have been responsible for impressive developments that have benefited learners and the region. For example, leaders and managers have achieved a successful merger with another college, completed an ambitious building programme, increased learner numbers and introduced several new courses that meet local and regional priorities. Throughout, leaders safeguarded the strong financial health of the college and ensured that learners' outcomes remained very high.
- The curriculum offer is comprehensive and relevant to learners and the local economy. Courses range from foundation courses and specialist programmes for learners with learning difficulties to the International Baccalaureate for 16–19-year-olds. Courses and programmes engage learners very well and enable them to develop skills and attributes that equip them for employment, higher education and for fruitful participation in modern British life.
- Middle leaders have direct responsibility for standards and for learners' achievements; they rise to the task very effectively, maintaining exceptionally high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. When improvements are needed, these are made rapidly and clearly. Teachers and managers have ready access to comprehensive information about their learners and use this information exceptionally well to set challenging goals and motivate learners. They are constantly looking for ways to improve and, as a result, learners achieve well and frequently exceed their targets.
- Teachers and managers contribute very well to improving teaching and learning through self-assessment and course reviews. Teachers' and middle managers' ownership of their courses has created a collaborative culture in which teachers and support staff learn from each other. They are confident and innovative when changes need to be made.
- Observations of teaching and learning and continuous professional development activities are very well-planned and highly effective. Staff value and trust the highly effective performance management and appraisal of teaching performance processes. Teachers know how to improve and quickly receive the help and support they might need. Leaders make exceptionally effective use of learners' views and information about their progress and performance in examinations or tests to substantiate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning.
- Partnerships with a wide range of external organisations are highly productive and effective and, as a result, the college caters very well for its learners across subject areas. Links with local employers are excellent and used well to motivate learners. These links enable the college to expand and improve its range of apprenticeships, which meet local and regional priorities very well. Successful partnerships and frequent talks from employers and careers experts complement the informative careers advice and guidance provided by the college.
- Leaders and managers promote equality and diversity well across the college. Learners are prepared extremely well for living and working locally or further afield in more diverse communities.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governors are very well informed about all aspects of college performance. They use their extensive expertise and experience extremely well to support and challenge leaders and managers to maintain high standards and implement improvements effectively.
 - They have a clear commitment to providing an excellent experience for learners. They visit lessons and meet staff and learners frequently. They use learners' views very effectively to review the quality of provision and make improvements.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding**
 - The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding arrangements are well considered, robust and comprehensive. Staff and governors receive regular training and updates on important matters such as social media, online safety, sexual exploitation, and recognising and keeping learners safe from extremism and radicalisation.

- Managers are vigilant in supporting and looking after vulnerable learners, such as those who are carers, looked after children or care-leavers.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe from exploitation. They can explain well the relevance of training in understanding democracy and the rule of law. They demonstrate tolerance and respect and put into practice the values of the college extremely well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The vast majority of learners make excellent progress from their often low starting points. Learners and their teachers have very high aspirations. As a result, learners routinely achieve stretching targets, display highly focused attitudes to their studies and are ambitious for their future.
- Teachers are highly skilled, apply their expertise to great effect in planning lessons, and bring a passion to their teaching that challenges and inspires learners to make rapid progress. Teachers frequently provide additional help outside lessons, demonstrating a strong personal commitment to their learners' success.
- Learners are very well prepared for examinations and assessments. Advanced-level learners in particular have a very good understanding of their own progress, and the extent to which they are on track towards meeting or exceeding their expected grades.
- Apprentices make good progress because they receive good training in the college and learn effectively at work. Apprentices and learners, including those with complex needs, develop excellent skills for work including teamwork and customer service skills during work experience with employers or at the college. Support and guidance for learners applying for university places are exceptional because learners have wide-ranging opportunities to explore the options open to them and because of the excellent encouragement and support from personal tutors.
- High-quality teaching resources and accommodation contribute substantially to learners' progress and are consistently used well by teachers. Learners work to high commercial standards in well-equipped workshops. The vast majority of teachers use information technology to very good effect. Learners continue their learning outside the classroom by making extensive and productive use of the college's well-developed virtual learning environment, often using mobile devices to make best use of the long daily journey times many have.
- Teachers' assessment of learning is excellent. They use a wide range of assessment methods very well. They have a very good understanding of their learners' progress. They use this information skilfully to give well-thought-out feedback which guides learners very effectively on what they need to do to make further improvements.
- Marking and feedback on learners' written work are highly effective, especially on GCE A-level English and access to higher education courses. Teachers' thorough evaluations highlight plainly and helpfully strengths and weaknesses in learners' work, cross-referenced closely to awarding bodies' assessment criteria. As a result, learners understand very well what is expected of them, substantially improve what they write and mostly make excellent progress over time.
- On GCSE English and functional skills courses, the majority of learners make good progress, often from low starting points. This is because standards of teaching are high, and because teachers use teaching time effectively. In addition, subject and vocational teachers integrate the development of learners' English into their lessons effectively; most teachers correct learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar well.
- Learners' progress on mathematics GCSE and functional skills courses is good. It has improved rapidly following the implementation of a range of well-conceived strategies similar to those that have been very successful in English. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, based on detailed analyses of learners' starting points.
- Additional learning support is well targeted and highly effective. Learners' support needs are identified promptly and accurately. Learners with complex needs receive excellent additional support in discrete and mainstream provision. This helps them to work with increasing independence. Specialist additional support for learners struggling with their English or mathematics is very good and easily accessible. Guidance and resources to help teachers to support learners with, for example, dyslexia, emotional health difficulties or behavioural problems are very good and are used very well by teachers.
- Teachers are highly effective in helping learners to study together productively. Subjects covered in tutorials and a broad programme of trips and other activities extend learners' horizons and aspirations effectively. However, the excellent practice in many lessons to help learners appreciate and value diversity is not replicated by all teachers across the college.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are outstanding

- Learners receive excellent guidance before they start at the college and at the start of their programmes. This helps them settle into their studies quickly. Staff motivate and raise learners' aspirations expertly by encouraging them to consider and establish their career plans at an early stage in their course.
- Learners' horizons are broadened very well by excellent careers guidance enriched by contributions from a wide range of speakers. Consequently, learners understand career options and the consequences of their choices very well. This results in them making very well-informed decisions about their next steps.
- Learners develop excellent communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills that significantly boost their employment potential. All learners participate in high-quality work experience, work-related activities and a wealth of very well-thought-out college programmes and activities covering aspects such as music, enterprise, engineering, medicine, hospitality and sport aligned to their long-term employment aspirations.
- Apprentices and learners, under the expert guidance of their teachers, readily undertake relevant additional qualifications that enhance their learning and employment prospects. Similarly, they benefit from taking part in an excellent range of local and national competitions that significantly boost their confidence and give them pride in their achievements.
- The wide range of excellent enrichment activities and sports helps learners to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle as well as improve their social and teamwork skills.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe. They demonstrate a high level of maturity and awareness of how to use social media sensibly and work safely online, avoiding the dangers of grooming and cyber-bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe in the workplace, on work experience and outside the college.
- Learners gain a good understanding of world events and learn to formulate their own views through effective participation in weekly tutorials. They have an excellent grasp of topics such as freedom of speech, the importance of voting in a democratic society and the rights and responsibilities of individuals. They are very alert to the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.
- Learners' behaviour is exemplary. They show a very high level of respect for each other, their teachers and college property. Managers and teachers have successfully created a most welcoming and hospitable atmosphere by adopting and promoting fundamental British values as college values to underpin daily life in the college.
- Learners' attendance in the vast majority of lessons is high, reflecting their positive attitudes to learning. Teachers challenge poor attendance and punctuality successfully, drawing attention to the implications of such behaviour for learners' examination results and employment prospects. In a minority of lessons for adult learners, attendance was low.

Outcomes for learners

are outstanding

- The vast majority of learners are aged 16–19 and their achievements and progress are excellent. The very large majority study at advanced level and success rates are very high for both vocational and GCE A-level learners, who attend college in approximately equal proportions. Almost all GCE A-level learners complete their courses successfully, as do over 90% of learners following substantial vocational qualifications at advanced level.
- The progress made by advanced-level learners relative to their prior qualifications is outstanding and consistently so for both A-level and vocational learners. This has been the case over the past three years and across both the Truro and Penwith campuses.
- Because of the excellent progress made by learners, high proportions of them achieve high grades. In 2014/15, 61% of A-level learners and 40% of those completing advanced vocational courses achieved high grades, which is well above the national rate.
- Learners take pride in their work and, consequently, standards of work are very high across the broad curriculum provided by the college. GCE A-level English language learners have a sophisticated understanding of how the choice and order of words influence meaning. Science learners work purposefully during practical lessons and demonstrate a thorough understanding of underlying theories when interpreting results.
- High standards are also evidenced in the skills gained by learners and their preparedness for working life. Catering and hospitality learners work together very effectively as a team and cope well with commercial pressure, while producing high-quality food for large groups. Graphic design learners produce material of commercial standards and demonstrate maturity and sensitivity when considering matters such as dementia when designing publicity materials.

- High standards of care and support have a striking beneficial impact on learners' progress and achievements. This is reflected in exceptionally high outcomes across the ability range. Learners in receipt of high-needs funding on mainstream courses make excellent progress and achieve their qualification aims.
- Learners in receipt of high-needs funding on discrete courses make excellent progress and develop their confidence, physical stamina and technical skills exceptionally well. They complete challenging activities. For example, they travel on the London Underground during residential trips to London, visit the Imperial War Museum and go to watch a show at the theatre. Learners with more complex needs and challenging behaviour gain confidence, improve their ability to concentrate and modify their behaviour so that they participate actively in learning.
- Learners make excellent progress to higher levels of study and into employment. Progression rates to higher education are very high, and around a third of A-level learners go on to prestigious universities.
- The proportion of learners who achieve A*–C grades in English is well above the national rate. Following effective action by managers, current learners following GCSE mathematics courses are increasingly making good progress.
- Success rates for apprentices and adult learners were in line with national rates in 2014/15. However, following decisive intervention by managers, current learners are making much better progress. Apprentices acquire a wide range of additional qualifications which improve their long-term employability. Standards of learners' work and achievement of qualifications on access to higher education programmes are very high; a high proportion of these adults progress into higher education.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes are outstanding

- Currently there are 5,108 full-time learners on 16–19 study programmes in 14 subject areas. The largest areas are science and mathematics, languages and arts and media, with most academic and vocational learners studying at advanced level. The vast majority of learners successfully achieve their qualifications and progress to higher level courses, university or employment.
- Leaders plan and manage study programmes to meet the needs of learners very effectively. As a result, learners follow highly personalised and challenging programmes that build on their prior attainment and prepare them exceptionally well for progression into their chosen career or next step in education.
- Learners who do not have GCSE grades A*–C in either English or mathematics on entry to the college make good progress in these subjects because of the effective help and support they receive. English and mathematics are given a very high priority in the planning of study programmes.
- Teaching is often inspirational. Teachers have very high expectations and ensure that learners are constantly challenged and engaged in their learning. They track learners' progress rigorously and plan their lessons accordingly. As a result, learners improve the pace of their learning, working at least at and mostly above the level expected of them. Learners benefit from excellent oral and written feedback that helps them to make rapid progress.
- Learners develop high-level practical and work-related skills through the effective use of industry-standard workshops and realistic work environments. For example, professional cookery learners benefit from working in industry-standard kitchens while preparing food for commercial restaurants. Excellent teaching and high expectations for good behaviour help learners develop both the personal and social skills they need at work. They become highly focused and confident, and display a mature attitude to learning.
- Learners enjoy their lessons. They arrive punctually for lessons fully prepared for learning, and attendance rates are high. Learners set themselves ambitious goals and are supported extremely well by their teachers, who routinely challenge them to reach their full potential and, where appropriate, encourage them to apply to top universities.
- Learners who are not doing as well as expected receive timely support to help them catch up. Those who need additional support in lessons receive it promptly from specialist support staff and make sustained progress.
- Teachers prepare both academic and vocational learners very well for their next step in education or employment. Learners are motivated by an excellent range of masterclasses, work-related activities and guest speakers who widen their understanding of the practical application of academic subjects, the nature of the workplace and the expectations of employers.
- Learners value and benefit from a comprehensive range of activities provided in addition to their academic and vocational courses. These include national and international educational visits, sporting activities, national competitions and a broad range of college-based sports and career academies such as the 'Medics' academy' for those aspiring to progress to a career in medicine.

- Learners achieve a wide range of additional qualifications and skills to improve their prospects of gaining employment or progressing to university. For example, learners in beauty therapy gain additional qualifications in gel polish and tanning; sports learners gain qualifications in first aid and leadership; and vocational engineering learners are encouraged to study mathematics to a higher level.

Adult learning programmes

are good

- There are currently 959 adult learners, around 7% of the college total. Learners study on full-time access to higher education programmes, part-time professional programmes, part-time vocational, GCSE and functional skills programmes, and bespoke programmes that meet local employer and community needs.
- Leaders are managing a significant reduction in the number of programmes for adults effectively in line with funding priorities. They are working well with employment and enterprise groups to ensure that programmes reflect local, regional and national priorities.
- Learners benefit from the excellent subject knowledge and current industry and business experience of their teachers. Teachers draw on this expertise extensively to develop learners' understanding and skills and make good use of work-related examples to illustrate key learning points.
- In the large majority of lessons, learners make good progress because teachers provide a good range of interesting activities and learning resources, including the effective use of technology. Learners are keen to learn; they work productively and with interest and most make good progress.
- On access to higher education programmes, learners benefit from very good individual coaching, work to high standards and develop skills that prepare them well for higher education. For example, learners on the access to science programme develop a good range of analytical and research skills when working on individual projects. Learners also make good use of comprehensive online learning resources to extend their learning or catch up when they have missed lessons.
- Learners on access and professional courses develop their English and mathematical skills well. They increase their understanding and use of complex technical language and analyse complex written information and data well.
- A minority of lessons for part-time adult learners are less effective. Teachers do not plan their teaching to take full account of different levels of learners' skills and understanding. For example, in some GCSE mathematics and functional skills lessons, learners who have a wide range of ability too often work at the same pace and level. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work for the most-able learners.
- Teachers' questioning of learners in the part-time provision is not always effective and they do not check that all learners understand the topic in hand. It is not always clear who has understood the key learning and who needs further explanation or practice.
- Teachers mark learners' work carefully and return it promptly, with very helpful feedback on how they can improve their work further. Learners are prepared well for examinations and teachers' monitoring of learners' progress is good. On a minority of courses, learners' attendance is too low.
- Teachers help learners to develop good employment-related skills, including effective time-management and teamwork skills, and research and practical laboratory skills.
- Learners on access to higher education programmes receive comprehensive advice and guidance that help them progress to higher education and future employment. Learners demonstrate high levels of respect for their teachers and their peers.

Apprenticeships

are good

- The college has 488 apprentices in eight subject areas, the largest of which are health and care, retail and commercial enterprises, and business administration. Of these, 161 are advanced and 16 are higher level apprentices.
- Liaison between the college and employers is very effective. Staff match young people's aspirations to employers' needs well, which increases apprentices' motivation. Managers have taken decisive and effective action to raise the proportion of apprentices gaining their qualifications. Current apprentices are making good progress and the great majority will complete within their agreed timescale.
- Assessors monitor apprentices' progress well. At frequent reviews, apprentices are set clear targets that are shared with their employer. Communication between assessors and employers is excellent. Employers understand how well apprentices are progressing, and how to support them in the workplace and help them to achieve. Additional support is provided promptly for apprentices who fall behind with their work.

- Well-qualified staff use their considerable vocational experience well, and apprentices grow in confidence as a result. Teaching and learning in off-the-job training sessions are good. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan sessions well, relating topics thoughtfully to work situations. This helps apprentices to develop relevant knowledge and vocational skills which they can then refine at work. They gain good work-related skills including communication, time-keeping and teamwork as well as the ability to calculate the costs of services provided. As a result, apprentices' English and mathematical skills are developed well through the training.
- Teachers and assessors provide helpful, detailed oral and written feedback to apprentices on their progress and consequently apprentices know what they need to do next and how to improve the standard of their work.
- Apprentices' behaviour at work and college is exemplary. Teachers and assessors help apprentices to acquire professional standards in both their work and appearance. They know how to keep themselves safe and they adopt safe working practices.
- Apprentices gain a wide range of additional qualifications that improve their employment prospects and help them to contribute more effectively to their employers' business. For example, hospitality and construction apprentices complete first-aid qualifications, and hair and beauty apprentices achieve a separate qualification in skin care.
- Apprentices make a considerable positive contribution to employers' businesses. They develop good technical skills. In some cases, their project work has led to increased business through high-quality marketing plans or substantial cost savings through the introduction of new business procedures. For example, one apprentice brought the printing of notices and logos on safety clothing in-house, which resulted in substantial cost savings and new orders from local and national businesses.
- Not all apprentices retain their employment at the end of their apprenticeship. However, the skills, knowledge and experience they acquire enable them to secure sustainable employment with other employers promptly. Many apprentices progress from intermediate to advanced and higher levels.

Provision for learners with high needs is outstanding

- The college has steadily expanded its specialist provision for a wide range of high-needs learners in response to local needs. There are currently 86 learners on foundation programmes receiving high-needs funding. This includes a small but increasing number of learners with autistic spectrum disorders and with very high support needs. A further 94 learners with learning difficulties, disabilities or medical conditions are on mainstream programmes across both the Truro and Penwith campuses.
- Assessment of learners' needs is rigorous and comprehensive. Highly productive partnerships with specialist agencies in areas such as autism and mental health, and close cooperation with the local authority and social care services result in successful education, health and care plans. Learners and their families receive excellent advice and guidance, and learners' transitions to college are managed carefully. They benefit from exceptionally well-designed programmes tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Support for learners is very well planned and highly effective. Skilled, dedicated teachers work very effectively with well-trained support staff to ensure that learners participate in activities as fully as they are able. As a result of the excellent support they receive, learners on mainstream courses feel safe and make very good progress. They develop essential study skills well and increase their confidence in their ability to learn independently and work alongside their peers.
- Teachers take full account of learners' different needs in planning lessons. Teaching is lively, interesting and engaging and learners make excellent progress, improve their independence and gain skills for employment. Teachers make very effective use of well-equipped accommodation and a wide range of specialist resources. They provide excellent sensory and practical experiences which highly motivate and inspire learners.
- Teachers have very high expectations for learners, ensuring that they participate fully and experience rich and varied learning. Learners enjoy sea adventures and rock climbing and take part in charity races such as the Ten Tors challenge across Dartmoor; others improve their motor skills and fitness through dance and drama. Learners at Penwith join in sports lunch clubs. Many across the college benefit from a nationally accredited home-cookery course.
- Teachers successfully incorporate activities that improve learners' skills in English and mathematics in all practical activities, for example through checking recipes, reading maps or following workplace instructions. An increasing number of learners improve their skills well enough to achieve entry level and level 1 qualifications in functional skills. Learners with limited reading skills do not make rapid enough progress in a small minority of lessons because teachers do not emphasise the importance of these skills clearly enough and do not always simplify written instructions to appropriate levels or adjust typeface sizes.

- Learners are very well prepared for employment through an outstanding supported internship programme. Managers have developed productive relationships with local employers who value the positive contributions learners make to their businesses. Learners are well trained in a range of job roles and a significant number of learners gain permanent employment through their work experiences. Staff work very well with local agencies to support learners' transition to their next step in learning or to an independent life beyond college.

Provider details

Type of provider	Tertiary college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	8,899
Principal	David Walrond
Website address	www.truro-penwith.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	191	99	742	495	4,174	326	0	39
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	145	166	51	110	0	16		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	7		0		7			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main sub-contractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Kenneth Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Green	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alastair Pearson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fadia Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Lacey	Ofsted Inspector
Kathleen Tyler	Ofsted Inspector
Stefan Fusenich	Ofsted Inspector
Daisy Walsh	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Williams	Ofsted Inspector

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

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