

Peterborough Regional College

General further education college

Inspection dates

20–23 May 2019

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement	Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Too few learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications because leaders and managers have not focused sufficiently on supporting learners who are at risk of failing.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good. As a consequence, the large majority of learners only make adequate progress.
- Teachers do not do enough to help learners who have high needs increase their independence. Teachers do not provide learning activities that enable them to learn how to live independent lives.
- Teachers and assessors do not ensure that adult learners and apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills well enough.
- Teachers do not ensure that learners attend their lessons regularly. Although managers have accurate and detailed data about learners' attendance, managers' actions have not resulted in enough improvement.
- Managers do not ensure that learners receive careers advice to help them make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Leaders and managers do not track learners' next steps on completing their programmes. As a result, they cannot identify accurately which courses are most successful in helping learners progress into their chosen careers or relevant further learning.

The provider has the following strengths

- Decisive action by leaders and governors have started to have a positive impact on quality and learners' achievement. Staff are very optimistic about the rapid changes leaders have made to ensure that more learners pass their courses.
- Learners are polite, helpful and treat each other and staff with respect and courtesy. Apprentices develop excellent professional behaviours that they demonstrate well in their workplace.
- Learners and apprentices develop good practical and professional skills. Staff prepare learners in beauty therapy, carpentry and public services particularly effectively for higher-level study or work.
- Managers have developed a good range of short courses to help adults gain the skills they need for work. Learners are better prepared for interviews, which helps many find employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Peterborough Regional College (PRC) is a medium-sized college serving the city of Peterborough and the combined authority of Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. The main campus is located close to the city centre, with media and journalism, employability and basic skills courses offered at two small sites nearby.
- The college offers a wide range of courses from entry level to level 4 to approximately 4,500 learners. The college provides a range of education and training opportunities, including 16 to 19 study programmes in a variety of vocational subjects, discrete programmes for learners who have high needs, adult learning programmes, traineeships and apprenticeships. The college also offers higher education and professional training courses.
- PRC works with six subcontractors to deliver apprenticeships and adult learning courses such as accountancy qualifications. Key stage 4 attainment in the college's main catchment area is below the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers need to rapidly improve the proportion of learners who pass their qualifications by ensuring that:
 - significantly more learners achieve the high-grade passes that their prior attainment suggests they are capable of, rather than just passing their qualifications
 - teachers and managers closely monitor the progress of learners and intervene appropriately when learners fail to meet their deadlines
 - managers support teachers to improve their teaching practice quickly so that more learners stay at college and enjoy their learning
 - learners of all ages attend their classes.
- Improve the monitoring of learners' next steps to better understand the impact courses have on the lives and future careers of learners.
- Provide good-quality careers advice for learners so that they can make informed and timely choices about their next steps.
- Ensure that learners with high needs develop their independent living skills to enable them to participate fully in college life and their community.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the success of both their learners and their staff. The acting principal knows the college well. Since she was appointed in December 2018, leaders and managers have quickly had a positive impact on improving staff morale. Staff now have greater confidence in the way the college is managed. Most staff are proud to work at the college.
- Leaders and managers now assess the quality of their provision accurately. They are realistic about the many weaknesses of the provision and have clear and sensible plans in place to bring about improvement. Managers are clear about their responsibilities. Senior leaders have set challenging targets for themselves and their managers. They check progress frequently against these targets. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes.
- New leaders and managers have acted swiftly to develop and to improve teachers' classroom performance. They use detailed curriculum area reviews to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of each area. Most managers set clear actions to improve teaching and learning. However, a few concentrate too much on improving processes, and not enough on identifying how staff can be more effective in the classroom.
- Leaders have very effectively improved many of the poor practices of staff. Leaders and managers are particularly effective in helping new staff from industry who do not have a teaching qualification to develop the teaching skills they need. Managers set new teachers, including agency staff, clear targets to improve. Managers track teachers' progress against these targets in detail, which helps them become effective classroom practitioners.
- Leaders and managers make effective use of their links with large businesses and organisations to help learners understand the behaviours and quality of work that employers look for. For example, hospitality learners benefit from close links with Peterborough Catering Association (PCA). These contacts enable learners to attend relevant and useful work placements and lead to employment. The good partnership with the PCA has resulted in college managers revising the curriculum to offer more relevant and practical qualifications to better meet employers' needs.
- Leaders and managers have been too slow to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subcontracted provision. Since the previous inspection, leaders have substantially reduced the number of poor-quality subcontractors delivering apprenticeship provision. Managers now identify accurately the weaknesses in teaching and have put plans in place to improve these, including no-notice observations and visits. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes.
- Leaders and managers have developed a clear strategy to improve the proportion of learners who achieve English and mathematics qualifications. The impact has been positive, with significantly more learners achieving their qualifications over time. However, the proportion of learners who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications is not yet good.
- Leaders and managers ensure that learners understand the diverse society they live in

through college events such as diversity day, Black History Month and mental health awareness week. Although managers have developed a range of activities to improve learners' knowledge of British values, too few adult learners and apprentices remember or understand these topics.

The governance of the provider

- Governors know the college well. They understand the key strengths and the many weaknesses of the college. The new chair, appointed in June 2018, acted decisively and swiftly at the beginning of the current academic year to appoint a new principal.
- Governors concentrate appropriately on improving outcomes for learners. They involve themselves fully in the life of the college, visiting frequently and talking to staff and learners. They are enthusiastic for change and very positive about the new direction for the college.
- Governors get detailed and clear reports to help them understand the progress that leaders and managers are making. This helps them to challenge leaders more effectively. However, governors have only very recently had enough information about the quality of teaching to enable them to understand fully the strengths and weaknesses of classroom practice.
- Greater numbers of governors now have experience of education, which enables them to understand in more detail the progress that leaders are making. Governors acknowledge the need to strengthen the board further by improving their knowledge and expertise in areas such as finance and human resources.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Well-trained safeguarding officers record safeguarding concerns in detail. They refresh their training frequently. They use their highly effective links with relevant external agencies to support learners with safeguarding concerns appropriately.
- Leaders make sure that staff attend relevant and frequent safeguarding training. Support staff, such as bus drivers and cleaners, have discrete and detailed safeguarding training appropriate to their roles. Staff understand how to keep learners safe.
- Managers have a detailed 'Prevent' duty action plan. They work closely and effectively with other educational establishments in Peterborough and with local counterterrorism policing organisations. Managers understand local threats well. However, adult learners and apprentices do not understand in enough detail how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.
- Managers follow robust safe recruitment processes. All staff have undergone appropriate security checks before working with learners. Managers make sure that risk assessments are in place for guest speakers and that staff always accompany them while they are on college premises.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe at college and in the workplace and know how to report any concerns. They cover safeguarding in detail during induction. Managers make

sure that learners are safe online through information technology monitoring systems that indicate concerns quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Not enough teachers provide learning activities that enable learners at all levels to make good progress. Teachers do not take enough account of learners' starting points, so activities are often too easy or too difficult for them. Not enough study programme teachers provide activities to challenge the most able learners. On adult programmes and in subcontracted provision, the pace of learning is often too slow.
- Teachers do not check in enough detail how well learners understand the topics they are studying. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not allow learners enough time to reflect on their answers and make wider connections. On occasion, they allow a few learners to dominate classes. As a result, teachers do not know if learners have understood the topics they are teaching.
- Teachers do not help learners who have high needs to develop their independent learning skills well enough. Learners on vocational programmes rely too much on support staff to provide explanations and help them to complete tasks on time. This limits their opportunities to develop strategies for themselves and to reduce the amount of help they need over time.
- Not enough teachers give study programme and adult learners clear and helpful information on what they need to do to improve their written and practical work. Teachers set learning activities for learners who have high needs that are too generic and are not always meaningful for learners, particularly for those with the most complex needs. Teachers do not routinely set and review short-term targets to improve adult learners' skills and knowledge development.
- Learners in catering, hairdressing, beauty therapy and carpentry learn in realistic working environments, which helps them make particularly good progress in developing high-quality practical skills and knowledge. Teachers in these subjects organise and plan activities that replicate closely industry practice. For example, catering learners of all levels work together to produce and serve meals in the college restaurant. Teachers plan tasks carefully to enable advanced-level learners to improve their skills and understanding by supervising other learners. Learners on lower-level courses learn higher-level skills from their peers, which extends their learning above course requirements.
- Learners who have previously been excluded from school or disengaged from learning make good progress. Teachers actively engage learners who have previously been unsuccessful in school or studied in alternative settings. These learners attend well and most stay at college until the end of their programmes. Adult learners who have been absent from formal education for many years make good progress.
- English and mathematics teachers focus very closely on the needs of individual learners, including adults and learners who speak English as an additional language. They provide helpful and effective strategies to enable learners to practise and improve their skills. However, teachers of adult vocational courses and subcontracted provision do not develop learners' English skills well enough. Teachers do not consistently correct learners' spelling and grammar mistakes to help them improve their skills. Teachers of learners in

specialist high needs groups do not always make good use of practical activities to practise and consolidate learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

- Teachers on study programmes promote equality and diversity appropriately in lessons. They frequently include topics and units that widen learners' understanding of different cultures and backgrounds. Staff have created an environment where learners from different cultures respect each other and work productively together.
- Support staff provide good support for learners with high needs. They understand the needs of learners well. Support staff provide a range of drop-in workshops to help learners complete their work. Learners value the extra support and attend these workshops well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Learners' attendance is low. Teachers track learners with poor attendance and encourage them to attend extra classes to catch up on the work they have missed. However, leaders and managers have not yet ensured that attendance is high across the college. Attendance of learners who have not attended school or taken part in learning for some time is high.
- Not enough learners receive useful and impartial advice and guidance from specialist staff. As a result, learners are not always able to make sensible choices about their next steps in education or work.
- Adult learners and apprentices do not understand how British values and the 'Prevent' duty impact on their daily lives. Too many lack a detailed knowledge of the signs of radicalisation. They do not know in enough detail how to safeguard themselves against the risks posed by extremists.
- Learners organise their folders well and keep careful notes of what they have learned. They are proud of the work they complete and the new skills they learn.
- Most learners understand the requirements and expectations of employers through involvement in external projects with local organisations. For example, healthcare learners designed a secure door for the Cambridgeshire Police Force. Creative arts learners designed a forensic laboratory for the local National Health Service trust.
- Most learners gain useful and relevant additional skills and qualifications that enhance their job opportunities. Learners on childcare courses gain first-aid skills which help their work with young people. Construction learners achieve a health and safety qualification which enables them to secure work.
- Learners benefit from a range of activities that help them to explore personal and social issues. For example, diversity days, well-being events and learners' conferences help them find out about the society in which they live.
- Learners have high standards of behaviour in most classes and around the college. They are polite and helpful and treat each other and staff with respect and courtesy. However, in a small number of classes, teachers do not deal effectively with low-level disturbances from a few learners. This affects the progress of all learners in these classes.
- Teachers help learners to understand the diversity of life in modern Britain. Learners understand other cultures and religions and are tolerant and inclusive in their outlook.

Teachers make discrete checks on the welfare of learners observing Ramadan.

- Learners know how to keep themselves safe. They know who they should report any concerns to and are confident that safeguarding concerns will be dealt with appropriately.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Despite a rise in overall achievement rates in 2017/18, too few study programme learners achieved their qualifications. Not enough learners who remain at college until the end of their programme pass their examinations. Achievement rates for adult learners declined slightly in 2017/18 and are too low.
- Leaders and managers have reduced the proportion of learners who leave their courses early. They have substantially improved systems for monitoring learners' progress. Staff have improved their support for learners who are at risk of not achieving.
- The proportion of apprentices who completed their qualification within the time planned declined in 2017/18 and is low. Leaders and managers have taken positive steps to enable more apprentices to achieve in 2018/19 but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions. Apprentices in curriculum areas such as accounting, business and administration, engineering manufacture, vehicle body and paint and vehicle maintenance have high achievement.
- Male and female learners and those with or without a declared learning disability achieve at similar rates. Teachers support learners in local authority care well and, as a result, their achievement is often better than that of their peers. However, there are too many achievement gaps between adult learners from different ethnic backgrounds. Leaders and managers are aware of these gaps and are planning carefully to ensure that all learners achieve.
- The standard of learners' work meets the requirements of their qualifications and the expectations of their chosen industry or business. Adults studying science acquire particularly good skills and knowledge that prepare them well for university. However, the quality of adults' written and practical work in business and information technology and computing is poor and does not prepare them for higher-level study sufficiently well.
- Leaders have rapidly improved the proportion of learners who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. However, not enough learners achieve their functional skills qualifications. Adult learners' achievement of GCSE English and mathematics grades 9 to 4 is high but, for 16- to 18-year-olds, it is still too low.
- Most learners continue into higher-level study, work or university. Most apprentices secure permanent full-time work once they complete their programme of study. A small proportion continue on to higher-level study or gain promotion and further responsibilities within their place of work. However, because leaders and managers have not previously tracked the destinations of all learners sufficiently well, they cannot accurately evaluate if enough learners progress into their chosen careers or relevant further learning.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Most learners at the college are enrolled on study programmes. At the time of inspection, 795 learners are studying at level 1 and below, 768 at level 2 and 1,076 at level 3.
- Managers make sure that their courses meet the principles of study programmes. They enrol learners on to appropriate programmes, which include English and mathematics courses where needed. Many current learners have already completed relevant work experience. In addition, learners take part in appropriate and effective work-related learning activities. For example, learners studying public services have completed riot training with the police, and music learners have worked on live commissions set by advertising industry professionals.
- Teachers do not use information about students' starting points and their potential barriers to learning effectively to plan their learning. As a result, too many learners study the same topics in the same way. The most able students do not progress quickly enough and the least able get left behind.
- Too few teachers correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors in learners' work. A few teachers do not model good spelling, including subject-specialist technical terms. In addition, teachers do not always develop the skills learners will need in higher-level study, such as the correct use of paragraphs and referencing.
- Learners do not value the content or understand the purpose of tutorials. As too few learners attend tutorials, learners miss the opportunity to review their progress. Consequently, learners do not understand fully how much progress they are making or what they need to do to achieve to a higher standard.
- Managers have recently introduced much-improved systems to monitor learners' attendance and punctuality. This has had a positive impact on learners' punctuality but the impact on learners' attendance has not been rapid enough.
- Learners benefit from talks and workshops about their future careers as part of their classroom learning and during tutorials. However, too many learners do not understand how the careers team can help them plan their future careers. Consequently, they do not know enough about their next steps.
- Learners feel safe, have a good knowledge of safeguarding and value the support of the security team. They are aware of what to do if they have concerns about radicalisation and extremism. They are aware of the support of the well-being team to keep themselves healthy. Learners understand and can talk in detail about British values. Learners work effectively in diverse groups and are extremely respectful of each other's backgrounds.
- Teachers promote diversity effectively in lessons to create respectful learning environments. For example, beauty therapy teachers embed cultural awareness well by teaching learners how to adapt treatments to suit the needs of clients from different cultures.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The college offers a range of adult learning programmes providing routes to employment and further study. Approximately 1,700 adult learners study at PRC. Of these, over half study at level 1 or below, taking courses including care and preparation for employment. Of those who study at level 3, the majority take access to higher education courses.
- Teachers do not routinely set and review learners' targets in lessons and between progress reviews, which are often infrequent and cursory. Where teachers set targets, they are too general. Teachers do not set targets with learners frequently enough to enable learners to see the progress they are making.
- Adult learners do not have enough access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Consequently, they cannot make informed choices to determine the best pathway to achieve their future employment and life goals. Too many learners do not have plans in place for their next steps.
- Adult learners are keen to learn and participate productively and enthusiastically in lessons. They value the courses they attend as a route to improve their career prospects. They use their learning to gain employment or promotion at work or to enhance their personal skills and quality of life.
- Learners on access to higher education courses for science and humanities receive helpful and detailed feedback from teachers. This enables them to prepare well for higher-level study. However, not enough teachers provide adult learners with sufficiently specific feedback on their marked work to help them understand how to improve.
- Managers have established strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and local employers to make sure that those who are furthest from work or socially excluded have an effective pathway back into employment. Learners value these programmes greatly and use them as a stepping stone towards work.
- Teachers develop learners' English and mathematics skills well in basic skills and classes for learners who speak English as an additional language. However, too many vocational teachers do not consistently promote high standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling in classes or when providing feedback on learners' coursework. Managers do not ensure that learners have enough access to the English classes they need. The result is that too many learners are unable to move on to the next level of study.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Approximately 700 apprentices are on apprenticeship programmes. Of these, 349 are studying at intermediate level, 340 at advanced level and 20 at higher level. Most apprentices are studying framework qualifications.
- Achievement rates for apprentices are low and vary too much across subjects. While the proportions completing their apprenticeship in intermediate-level accounting, business administration, engineering, plumbing and surveying have improved, in advanced-level electrotechnical, health and social care and plumbing and heating, they remain too low.
- Too few teachers set clear, relevant and challenging learning activities for apprentices. Teachers do not work closely enough with employers to agree activities that are useful to

apprentices in the workplace. Consequently, not all apprentices are making rapid progress.

- Too few apprentices benefit from timely and useful feedback on how to improve their work. The quality of feedback that apprentices receive is too variable. Apprentices on a small minority of courses receive very little feedback on their work. As a result, apprentices find it difficult to improve their work to a high standard.
- Leaders and managers make sure that apprenticeship programmes meet the requirements of an apprenticeship. They have designed their apprenticeship programmes carefully, working with employers and the local enterprise partnership to make sure that they meet the needs of employers. Leaders and managers recognise that a few apprentices are not currently getting their full entitlement to off-the-job learning. They have acted quickly to rectify this.
- Teachers help most apprentices develop their technical skills and knowledge effectively. Apprentices use technical language confidently and understand the theoretical knowledge behind the practical work they complete. However, assessors do not always check how usefully apprentices apply the knowledge they gain at college within their day-to-day work. Consequently, assessors do not know what else apprentices need to learn for them to benefit fully from their apprenticeship.
- Specialist English and mathematics teachers ensure that apprentices develop effective literacy and numeracy skills through formal qualifications. However, not enough teachers in vocational classes help apprentices apply these skills to their written work. Teachers do not routinely correct apprentices' spelling and grammar in their assignments. As a result, apprentices' written skills do not continue to develop over time.
- Apprentices' behaviour in the workplace is excellent. They work closely and effectively with their teachers while at college. Most apprentices develop and improve their confidence during their programmes. They can express their opinions and ideas better, which improves the opportunities available to them at work.
- Most apprentices remain in full-time employment once they complete their apprenticeship. An increasing proportion are progressing on to higher-level study or gaining promotion within their workplace.
- Apprentices feel safe, both in the workplace and at college. They know who to talk to if they have concerns. However, too few apprentices understand about British values and how these apply to their daily lives.

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- PRC provides programmes for 144 learners with high needs, funded by four main local authorities. The large majority are studying on vocational courses across the college, with 26 studying on specialist courses ranging from pre-entry to level 1. Three learners are on a supported internship programme.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about learners' starting points to provide effective learning. Teachers often plan activities that are too difficult for learners. Consequently, learners are unable to complete them without help from support staff.
- Not enough teachers set meaningful and challenging activities for individual learners.

Learners do not have enough opportunities to visit the community, go shopping or learn how to travel on their own. As a result, too few learners improve their independent living skills and confidence.

- Teachers often do not ensure that learners practise or develop their English and mathematics skills in practical lessons. Teachers do not provide learners with enough opportunities to develop their social communication skills systematically. Very few learners use information and communication technology (ICT) to help them learn, apart from in specific ICT lessons. This limits the extent to which learners develop these valuable skills.
- Managers use the funding for high needs learners appropriately to provide the support that learners need to participate and learn effectively. Learners benefit from support that meets the requirements of their education, health and care (EHC) plans. This helps them to access all areas of the college environment and to develop their confidence and communications skills.
- Learners studying on vocational courses often achieve their qualifications better than their peers. Where teachers plan effectively, learners with high needs flourish and make good progress. For example, in practical catering classes, learners on level 1 courses benefit from working with learners studying at higher levels, each completing tasks relevant for the industry.
- Most learners studying for vocational qualifications progress to higher levels of study. They engage with all aspects of college life with confidence. Two of the three learners on supported internships have accepted paid employment.
- Learning support staff know their learners and are skilled at managing their behaviour. Therapists provide effective specialist support and advice where required. This helps learners who have deteriorating conditions or have multiple physical and learning needs to access learning activities. Managers have improved the availability of assistive communication technologies, which helps learners complete their work.
- Teachers involve parents and carers effectively in the early stages of recruitment, during taster days and at initial assessment. They maintain weekly contact where required to ensure that parents are aware of their child's progress. Parents attend useful regular open days and evenings where they review the progress of their children with teachers. Parents value the frequent contact they have with staff at the college.
- Teachers make good use of tutorials to provide appropriate careers advice. Learners benefit from talks by outside speakers, which helps develop their understanding of their next steps. Teachers, learners, parents and staff from local authorities work closely together to plan transition arrangements for learners as part of their EHC plan reviews. Staff work closely with learners to help them plan for their next steps.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130613
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,449
Principal/CEO	Rachel Nicholls
Telephone number	01733 762 163
Website	www.peterborough.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	795	899	768	496	1,076	281	-	26
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	213	136	141	199	5	15		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	18		2		20			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	144							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Anglia Professional Training Limited eVolve your future ltd North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust Peterborough City Council Peterborough Skills Academy/Peterborough Skills Ltd Aspire Sporting Academy Limited							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the acting principal 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.

Inspection team

Linnia Khemdoudi, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Russ Henry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andy Fitt	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Richards	Ofsted Inspector
David Gartland	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Mobbs	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Jill Arnold	Ofsted Inspector
Joyce Deere	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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