

# Cruckton Hall School

Cruckton, Shrewsbury, SY5 8PR

<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–11 June 2015
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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils	Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate school.

- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. They have not ensured that all pupils feel safe and that the teaching and curriculum enable them to achieve well. They have an over-generous view of some pupils' progress.
- Information held about pupils' achievements and their special educational needs is not used effectively by all staff. Pupils, particularly the most able, do not all have work that meets these needs and challenges them to achieve more.
- Achievement in science and in writing is not as good as in mathematics and reading. Pupils have too few opportunities to write at length. In science, timetabled lessons sometimes do not take place because pupils do not turn up or they absent themselves from lessons.
- Too many behavioural incidents take place that worry staff, parents and pupils.
- Time for learning is wasted and pupils lose interest because lessons sometimes get off to a slow start. Occasionally, lessons finish early and pupils are not moved onto the next things they need to learn.
- Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in ensuring that standards in their subjects improve.
- Not all staff consistently follow the school's behaviour policy or pupils' care plans. This confuses pupils and slows down their progress towards managing their own behaviour.
- Some staff are not confident in managing the extreme behaviour of a few pupils. Too often other pupils' learning is interrupted because of this. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough.
- Parents and staff are concerned about the safety at the school. Some parents feel that the school is too slow to respond to their concerns, particularly about bullying and their child's progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new leadership and the proprietor are clear what needs to be done. They have introduced improved ways of holding staff to account for pupils' progress. Staff value the practical support for teaching and learning from leaders. Teaching and learning are already improving in some subjects as a result.
- In some subjects, such as history, physical education (PE) and art, pupils listen and achieve well.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress because learning is well tailored to their needs and their behaviour is managed consistently well.
- Individual pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. A few achieve the highest levels at GCSE. Others improve their behaviour and attitudes considerably.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning in lessons in all parts of the school, almost always accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team. Pupils' work was examined through a detailed scrutiny of books and folders, as well as during lessons. This enabled inspectors to explore pupils' achievement and progress, the breadth of work covered and aspects of teaching such as marking.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the lead teacher for behaviour and representatives of the proprietor, such as the company Education Manager and health and safety lead.
- Inspectors checked compliance with the independent school standards. This included ensuring that all the required information for parents, carers and others, including a compliant safeguarding policy, was available on the school's website.
- The inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including the information the school collects about pupils' learning and behaviour, policies and records as to how the school keeps pupils' safe; the school's improvement planning; and the planning for different subjects.
- Thirteen responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire were considered, as well as 21 questionnaires from staff. Inspectors also took account of parental views expressed in telephone calls and pupils' views in notes sent to the inspection team.
- Inspectors also met with a group of pupils, as well as talking informally with them during lessons and leisure times.

## Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cruckton Hall School is a special school located on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. It was originally registered in 1981 and educates boys aged 8 to 19. There are currently 49 pupils on roll.
- All pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and associated conditions (ASD), and in particular Asperger's syndrome. Many pupils have other diagnoses of special educational needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- At its last inspection in March 2012, the school provided education on two different sites, its main site and a satellite site about four miles away to the east of Shrewsbury. Sixth form pupils were educated at the satellite site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were educated at the main site. A small number of pupils of secondary age are currently being supported at the satellite site or in their homes as they make the transition into school or because they refuse to attend school.
- There are currently no sixth form students on the roll of the school and there have not been for some time. The sixth form provision is therefore not reported on.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all have histories of severely challenging behaviour. Many have not attended school regularly for some time. About a fifth are looked after by different local authorities from across England and Wales.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. A very few have English as an additional language.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. Pupils visit off-site specialist facilities, such as those for forest school work or equine therapy, with staff from the school.
- The school receives the pupil premium funding for a small number of pupils who are in the care of the local authority. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- At the time of the inspection, building work at the school was almost finished. This provides discrete office accommodation and enhanced facilities for the inclusion unit, where pupils who are having difficulty in class can withdraw to.
- The school is owned by the Kisimul Group, which owns two other similar schools in England. The group employs a number of company managers for different aspects of their schools' work, such as for health and safety, safeguarding and education.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection, particularly in the last two years. These include a new headteacher and deputy headteachers, and several subject teachers and support staff. A new deputy headteacher took up post in June 2015. A special educational needs coordinator was due to start at the school the week following this inspection.

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - all the independent school standards are met
  - pupils and staff feel and are safe at the school
  - the school's policies relating to behaviour, anti-bullying and recording incidents and sanctions are followed consistently by staff
  - the role and effectiveness of home-based learning and the inclusion unit is reviewed, so that staff, parents and pupils understand its purpose and effectiveness, and pupils' attendance in school and in some individual subjects improves
  - subject leaders' roles in improving their subjects are developed further
  - the curriculum delivered by teachers and the work provided inspires pupils to stay in the classroom
  - time for learning is used effectively
  - assessments and checks carried out on pupils' learning and progress are accurate and the information gained is used by leaders and all teachers to ensure that pupils' needs are met and their achievement improves.

- Improve teaching and pupils' achievement by making sure that:
  - all teachers are clear as to the priorities and next steps in individual pupils' learning, behaviour and the subject itself, and the strategies they should use to achieve these
  - strategies used to support pupils' learning and behaviour are reviewed for their effectiveness regularly, including the use of the inclusion unit, time out and home-based learning
  - teachers have high expectations of all pupils' behaviour and achievement, informed by evidence gained from the psychological and other assessments carried out by the school and other activities they take part in within the school
  - work is more closely matched to pupils' previous learning and is not too easy for the most able
  - teachers' confidence and skills in managing pupil behaviour improve, through staff training and drawing on the best practice within the school
  - developing the ways in which pupils are encouraged to write or to record their ideas and the opportunities pupils have to apply these skills in different subjects
  - teaching learning and achievement improves in science
  - lessons do not start late or finish early and that time for learning is effective.
  
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by ensuring that:
  - all staff consistently implement the school's behaviour policy and pupils' individual care plans
  - care and other plans make clear how pupils' poor or difficult behaviour is to be managed and particularly when they work in groups
  - the rewards and sanctions to be used with individuals and for specific behaviours are clear, so that pupils have consistent messages as to what is poor behaviour and what they have done that is good
  - staff training provides staff with practical skills and strategies that improve their management of each individual's behaviour
  - all records of incidents make clear the actions taken and sanctions imposed so that leaders and others can analyse these in more detail and in particular consider the impact of any sanctions
  - bullying is recorded as such and actions taken to eliminate this are clear to parents, pupils and staff
  - staff review the use and effectiveness of the inclusion unit in helping pupils to manage their behaviour and stay in school
  - staff check more rigorously on how much time individual pupils spend out of lessons and why, and putting into place systems to improve this.

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

- The proprietor ensures that a written policy for the curriculum, supported by schemes of work, is implemented effectively; takes account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an education, health and care plan; and encourages pupils to fulfil their potential and to learn and make progress (paragraphs 2, 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(e)(iii)).
- The proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and develop their skills through the subjects taught, motivates pupils to learn and to achieve their potential, utilises available time for learning well and shows a good understanding of pupils' aptitudes and prior attainment (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d)).
- The proprietor ensures that the teaching in the school utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraphs 3, 3(h)).
- The proprietor ensures that principles are promoted that enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour (paragraphs 5, 5(b), 5(b)(ii) and 5(b)(iii)).
- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that good behaviour is promoted in the school because the behaviour policy is implemented effectively and a record is kept as to the sanctions imposed on pupils for serious misbehaviour (paragraphs 9, 9(b), 9(c)).
- The proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as is reasonably practicable by the effective implementation of its anti-bullying strategy (paragraph 10).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school

demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c).

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- The proprietor and school leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. Behaviour and safety, teaching and achievement are inadequate. Aspects of the school's work have deteriorated since the last inspection. Many staff changes have unsettled parents, placing authorities, pupils and staff. The new leadership team has not yet been able to establish an ethos in which teaching and good behaviour can flourish.
- Although some pupils do achieve high standards and improve their behaviour well, inconsistencies in teaching and learning and in the management of behaviour mean that too many do not. The leadership has not acted swiftly enough to deal with these inconsistencies and with the parental, staff and pupils' anxieties about safety.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils feel safe or that their safety is secure. Policies are not consistently followed and expectations are not high enough about behaviour. Some issues, such as verbal abuse directed towards staff and pupils, are not managed or responded to in any uniform way. This confuses pupils and undoes the work of staff that do follow the agreed approach.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's outcomes and of the progress of pupils in the school. There are not robust checks in place to ensure that staff evaluation of pupils' progress and achievement are accurate. Inspectors' checks indicated that work in books did not always match pupils' identified levels in some subjects. This was more reliable in Key Stage 2.
- The school offers a good range of subjects that are relevant to both the ages and aptitudes of pupils. It also provides therapy and other specialist support in line with pupils' statements of special educational needs, where required. Schemes of work and guidance for teachers' planning reflect the proprietor's commitment to provide a balanced and rich curriculum. However, the curriculum is inadequate because it is not implemented effectively enough to inspire pupils to learn and to make good progress. Some pupils say that they have already covered much of the work that they are given when they explain why they do not come to school.
- Appropriate careers guidance is in place. The school works hard to prepare pupils for their next steps and for life in modern Britain through work in subjects such as history; personal, social, health and economic education; and religious education. Pupils consider different views, issues regarding different life styles and dilemmas, and recognise the signs of extremism. However, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is inadequate because some pupils do not develop sufficiently their understanding of right and wrong. Others do not learn to manage their behaviour as well as they could because staff deal with behaviour inconsistently.
- Subject leaders play a limited role in developing standards, teaching and learning in their subjects. Some staff are not clear as to who their subject leader is. Teaching varies considerably within subjects because subject leaders have limited time to monitor standards and provide support as to how to make the work covered more interesting for pupils.
- Too many pupils absent themselves from or are encouraged to leave lessons. Some work for large parts of the day either at home, in 'learning pods' or the school's inclusion unit. Sometimes there is confusion as to exactly where pupils are and whether they should be in a lesson or not. Although pupils are tracked down, the reasons why their timetable has been changed are not clear and all relevant staff have not been consulted. The amount of time that some pupils spend outside of classes is not tracked rigorously enough nor linked sufficiently into the rewards and sanctions programmes.
- The proprietor, headteacher and all staff at this school are determined to put things right. A programme of staff training and improved ways of monitoring of teaching and learning have been put into place. Increased specialist provision, such as educational psychology and regular progress meetings, help to identify pupils' needs more accurately. Although there is much information collected, the implications of this for classroom practice and teaching strategies are not always made clear to staff. Some actions are

too recent for their impact to be seen in classroom behaviour or teaching.

- Since their arrival, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken concerted action to try to stabilise the school. They have reviewed many of the school's policies and staff are now held much more to account for pupils' progress. Leaders have recognised that incidents and the use of physical restraint are too high. A new behaviour policy and house points system is paying off for some pupils who now stay on task in lessons more.
- Leaders are working hard with staff to improve the accuracy of assessment and to check on pupils' progress more rigorously. This includes establishing links with other schools so that the accuracy of assessment is more secure. Leaders, including the proprietor, check carefully on the spending of the pupil premium additional funding and how each pupil benefits either in their emotional well-being or academic progress.
- Joint visits to classrooms and discussions with leaders confirmed the accuracy of the judgement of those who currently lead teaching and learning as to the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Improvement plans reflect many of the issues identified by the inspection team, including the implementation of a new behaviour policy and rewards system. Staff speak highly of developments in the school recently, but are also unsettled by further staff changes as individual leaders leave. Some parents too are concerned about staff changes and feel that the school is not quick enough to address their concerns when raised.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding do not comply with requirements. The school is rigorous in carrying out the required checks on the suitability of staff and has appropriate policies on its website. However, pupils, staff and some parents do not consider that the school deals with behaviour and with bullying effectively. There are too many behavioural incidents which leave pupils and staff vulnerable.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors and company representatives have not ensured that the independent school standards are met and in particular those relating to Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the schedule.

The proprietors show a deep commitment to the school and have recognised the need to improve behaviour. They have already taken steps to improve it, such as through building works and additional appointments.

Kisimul leaders take a key role in holding the leadership to account and ensuring that new staff have appropriate training. Staff now have performance management targets linked closely to pupil progress and to improving their own skills. Pay progression is linked to these targets.

All the required checks on the safety of the building are in place and carried out as required. The premises are in good repair and damage is quickly rectified. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for activities and external visits.

The proprietors have had too positive a view as to the school's outcomes. They have not been able to ensure that pupils and staff feel safe and that teaching and progress are adequate for all pupils.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate**

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. While some pupils improve their attitudes to learning and are proud of the work they do, too many do not try their best in lessons and are reluctant to complete work. The extreme behaviour of a few disrupts the learning of others, so that sometimes even those who began by behaving well misbehave or leave the lesson.
- Attitudes to learning of pupils in Key Stage 2 are good because teachers are skilled at gaining their interest and helping them to work alongside each other. Pupils took great pride in making their flapjacks and following recipes.
- Incident logs and records show that there are too many incidents of poor behaviour. Often this is accompanied by pupils being physically restrained. Although pupils calm down and re-join classes, for a small number of pupils the use of physical restraint happens too often. This makes other pupils anxious.

- Even for the most difficult pupils, there are times when they really engage with lessons and keep on task and so learning progresses more smoothly. This is particularly so in subjects such as music, drama, history and religious education, and in some mathematics and English lessons. Pupils' behaviour is better at such times because staff capture pupils' interest in what they are to learn from the start and have high expectations of both pupils' involvement and success.
- Although many pupils' attendance improves compared with their previous placements, not all pupils stay in lessons once they have arrived at school. Some pupils work steadily in the school's inclusion unit or in the learning pods, but do not improve their learning behaviour in groups.
- The school rightly works hard to minimise pupils' anxieties. Work with therapists and the educational psychology team helps individual pupils manage this through specific strategies, such as timeout cards. However, inconsistencies in the management of behaviour and of bullying mean that a few pupils become too anxious to come to school and others do not learn to manage their behaviour sufficiently well.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate. This is because the school has failed to ensure that all the standards are met in relation to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to welfare, health and safety.
- The school has not ensured that pupils feel safe and free from bullying. Parents and pupils do not believe that the school has been effective in preventing bullying or in responding to it. Inspectors agree that while the school has appropriate policies in place, not all of these are followed consistently; for example, bullying incidents are not always recorded as bullying.
- Discriminatory language including racist language is used by some pupils although the sanctions then linked to this are not always clear. Some teachers are quick to signal when unacceptable language is used, but others are not. Some pupils comment that verbal abuse which would have been seen as bullying at their previous schools is 'just the norm' here.
- All this weakens the support that the school provides for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their preparation for life in modern Britain. Pupils receive confusing messages as to what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. This is despite some good work to help pupils to understand about different faiths and religions in religious education. For example, pupils are encouraged to reflect on moral dilemmas and how they might respond if they were a Christian or belonged to another faith.
- Other experiences and taught programmes such as forest school work, visits and outings, work experience and caring for animals all help pupils to be more environmentally and socially aware and to take responsibility.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teachers care deeply about their pupils and want them to achieve much, but too many teachers are not skilled in gaining the interest of pupils with ASD and in managing their challenging behaviours.
- Some lessons break down and not much work is completed because teachers and other staff spend too much time trying to manage or control behaviour and not always succeeding. This means that learning time is not used fruitfully in some classes and pupils' work reveals that sometimes little has been achieved.
- In some subjects, such as history, art and PE pupils learn well, because the topics interest pupils and build on what they already know very well. Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong and they take pride in their work and their achievements. Even when pupils do attend well, teachers are sometimes reluctant to challenge them to think even harder or staff are too quick to provide the answer to a question.

- Not all teachers match the work well to pupils' needs. Some more-able pupils say that they find the work too easy. Inspectors agree that in many lessons the most able are not challenged by the work available for them to do in groups.
- The school's marking and house points system is used well by some teachers to spur pupils on to achieve even more. However, marking does not consistently make clear to pupils what is good about their work and how to improve it.
- It is not possible to report on the progress of pupils who have English as an additional language because of the small numbers involved. However, the school is careful to provide such pupils with individual support that enables them to move forward quickly in their spoken English and in their understanding.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics throughout the school require improvement because not all pupils make sufficient progress from their starting points. However, teaching in these areas is improving. This is because the school now checks more regularly on pupils' starting points in these subjects and on whether their skills in these subjects are improving. Where they are not, pupils receive extra help.
- A significant number of pupils make better than expected progress. In mathematics, there are good opportunities provided through other experiences for pupils to practise their mathematical skills. Any weaknesses are similarly addressed because the leader checks carefully on how well pupils are doing. However, overall progress in mathematics is inconsistent and this is why teaching over time is not yet good.
- The teaching of writing is inadequate. While pupils in Key Stage 2 experience more varied ways of writing, older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length both in English and other subjects.
- Teaching in science is inadequate; too many lessons do not take place or are disrupted by poor behaviour. Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms standards and progress in science to be weaker than in other subjects as a result.
- Some good examples of teaching assistants and teachers working together to promote learning were seen. This worked best when teaching assistants were actively involved in supporting learning, rather than used solely for managing pupils' behaviour. In a Year 8 English lesson, joint working by staff meant that although the lesson started badly, pupils were cooperating and working purposefully by the end of the session.

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate over time. Not all pupils make the progress they should and in some subjects, such as science and writing, a few pupils make very limited progress. Progress and achievement in English tends to be lower than in mathematics because some pupils do not make the expected progress in writing and this holds them back. Although the school tries to remedy some of these weaknesses, for example, by using its pupil premium funding to support individual pupils after school, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils' attainment on entry varies considerably. Some have lost ground because of disrupted schooling, despite achieving highly in Key Stage 2, while others have retained good skills in subjects of particular interest to them such as information and communication technology (ICT), music or mathematics. Inspectors' observations, pupils' work and data available show that, following entry to the school, individual pupils make accelerated progress in subjects and begin to make up lost ground. Many improve in their personal and social skills. However, too many pupils do not make the expected progress and particularly in English and science. This is why achievement is inadequate.
- The school has chosen to continue to use the national curriculum levels, alongside standardised reading and spelling assessments, to check on pupils' progress. Until recently, it did not collect detailed data

about pupils' progress or their starting points on entry to the school. This has improved but not all staff are as skilled at accurately assigning levels or adapting the work to take account of these. Work in books confirms that, although progress is often good in subjects such as history and art, it is too variable in other subjects.

- Although individual pupils gained eight GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, last year, other pupils did not make such good progress. The school anticipates a much higher proportion of pupils will gain five GCSEs grades A\* to C, including in English and mathematics, this year. All pupils are on track for achieving at least one GCSE grade A\* to G. However, where available, information about their previous achievements show that pupils throughout the school are capable of much more than their current work shows. Pupils' progress in a number of subjects is held back because of the ways in which others pupils' behaviour slows their learning or because of poor attendance for individual subjects.
- The pupil premium has been used effectively to provide additional support to individual pupils after school to help them achieve more. This has helped eligible pupils to take higher qualifications in French, biology, physics and chemistry, improve their reading or successfully achieve other qualifications linked to their interests, such as in equine management.
- Progress in some subjects such as art, physical education and drama is good. This directly reflects the quality of teaching and consistency of behaviour management in these subjects. Pupils listened carefully as their teacher helped them to consider stage lighting and other issues when creating a video about superheroes in drama, following instructions very well. Work prepared for moderation in art was of a high standard and demonstrated the concentration and care pupils had put into their work.
- Key Stage 2 pupils, though very new to the school, are making good progress in their English and mathematics work. This is because it is carefully matched to their levels and to challenge them to achieve more.
- Pupils value the opportunities they have to go out of school and in particularly those related to forest schools and to equine therapy. Records show that some make remarkable progress in such activities in their team work and cooperation and awareness of others' needs, as well as gaining, for example, qualifications in equine management.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123619
<b>Inspection number</b>	462914
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6017

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent school
<b>School status</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	49
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kisimul Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Hill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marcia Garnett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2012
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	[add fees]
<b>Telephone number</b>	01743 860206
<b>Fax number</b>	N/A
<b>Email address</b>	marcia.garnett@cruckton.com

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