

British Schools Overseas

Inspection Report

British Junior Academy of Brussels

May 2019



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School's Details

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 The British Junior Academy of Brussels (BJAB) is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged from 3 to 11 years situated in the heart of the European quarter of Brussels. It opened in 1992 as a school primarily for children from the British expatriate community. Under the current proprietor since 1999, it has served a broader spectrum of the community and a wide range of nationalities. It is a not-for-profit organisation under Belgian law overseen by a Board which acts in an advisory capacity. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed, who had previously been headteacher from 2013 until 2015.

What the school seeks to do

1.2 The school is characteristically British in its ethos and style with an emphasis on traditional values. The school's aim is to deliver a broad and balanced education, which enables the individual child to develop to his or her maximum potential, in a dynamic and caring environment that promotes the essential qualities of integrity, loyalty, self-discipline, independence, self-confidence, kindness, mutual respect and consideration.

About the pupils

1.3 Most pupils are the children of expatriates, with 32 different nationalities represented in the school. Nine pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom five receive additional support for learning, cognitive, emotional, physical and other needs. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is 112, and 27 of these receive additional support for their English. For more able pupils identified by the school, the curriculum is modified as appropriate.

2. Inspection of Standards for British Schools Overseas

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting independent schools in England and overseas.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the Standards for British Schools Overseas. It also takes account, where relevant, of compliance with any local requirements.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include: an exhaustive health and safety audit; an indepth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures; an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law; in-depth consideration of the extent to which the school meets the requirements of local law and custom.

Headline judgements against the Standards for British Schools Overseas indicate that the Standards have been 'met' or 'not met' for accreditation.

Accreditation as a British school overseas lasts for three years. The school's last inspection was in April 2016.

Key findings

2.1 The school meets all the Standards for British Schools Overseas and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

Part 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The Standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1-4] are met.
- 2.3 The curriculum, including extra-curricular activities, provides pupils with a broad experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. It enables them to acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills and a good understanding of English. It provides personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils and ensure that activities are appropriate for all pupils. The curriculum provides all pupils with the opportunity to learn and make progress and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British and European society. The teaching is well planned, shows a good understanding of pupils' abilities and is characterised by secure subject knowledge and understanding. It makes effective use of resources enabling pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress. The teaching does not undermine fundamental British values and does not discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics.
- 2.4 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the quality of the pupils' learning and achievements and the contribution that the curriculum and teaching make to these outcomes.

Part 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.5 The Standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.
- 2.6 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance, and furthers the pupils' personal development. Principles are promoted which enable pupils to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence; to accept responsibility for their behaviour; to contribute to the lives of others; and to gain knowledge and respect for public institutions in England and for responsibilities of citizenship in Belgium. The curriculum, and especially the PSHE programme, together with the systems for pastoral care, all support the understanding of responsibilities and rights within the school community. The school teaches tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions, respect for other people and respect for democracy and the democratic process. It ensures a balanced presentation of political issues and preclusion of partisan political views.
- 2.7 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the quality of the pupils' personal development and the factors which contribute to their development.

Part 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 The Standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6-16] are met.
- 2.9 The school makes suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, taking account of both local and UK statutory requirements. Appropriate policies relating to safeguarding are implemented effectively. The staff have undertaken distance-learning safeguarding training from an accredited UK provider, including at a higher level for the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy. New staff receive suitable training at induction. The proprietor monitors the implementation of safeguarding procedures and undertakes an annual review. The school maintains suitable records relating to children of concern as well as of staff training. Pupils state that they feel safe in school.
- 2.10 The school implements a suitable policy to promote good behaviour. It employs appropriate rewards and sanctions and maintains thorough records relating to pupils' behaviour. Suitable measures to reduce the risk of bullying, which conform to local requirements, are in place, and the school keeps careful records of its response to any incidents, which may include support from outside agencies including psychologists. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that they are confident that teachers will address any problems.
- 2.11 The school's arrangements to promote health and safety, including fire safety standards, comply with local and UK requirements. The school has a suitable risk assessment policy to ensure that pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the site and on trips are thoroughly addressed. The school's first aid policy is comprehensive, and a number of staff are suitably trained. There is suitable provision for pupils who fall ill or who are injured in school. Medication is stored securely, parents are informed of any injuries beyond the minor, and records are kept of first aid and medication administered. Pupils are properly supervised and report that they can always readily find a member of staff. The admission and attendance registers are maintained as required.

Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.12 The Standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.
- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of persons appointed as staff, supply staff and proprietors. An appropriate central register of appointments is maintained, and all historical omissions had been rectified before the initial visit as part of a review of recruitment procedures. Staff files include all required documentation.

Part 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.14 The Standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

2.15 Pupils are provided with suitable and well-maintained toilet, washing and changing facilities. The school has adequate accommodation for the short-term care of pupils who fall ill or hurt themselves during the day. The premises are maintained in good condition to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are promoted. Lighting and acoustic conditions throughout the school are suitable. Water dispensers, maintained in clean condition, are readily available. Pupils have sufficient outdoor space for physical education and outdoor play.

Part 6 - Provision of information

2.16 The Standards relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] are met.

2.17 The school provides or makes available a suitable range of information to parents and prospective parents. This information includes contact details for the school, the proprietor and the leadership as well as a statement of the school's ethos. Policies relating to safeguarding, admissions, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, the curriculum, health and safety, first aid, provision for pupils with SEND and those with EAL, as well as complaints are published on the school's website together with other useful information. Particulars of the school's academic performance in the preceding school year are also posted on the website. Parents receive written reports on their children's progress and attainment each term.

Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.18 The Standards relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] are met.

2.19 The school has a suitable complaints policy which is available to parents on its website. Parental complaints, if any, are handled through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel, one of whom is independent). At the panel hearing, the complainant may attend and be accompanied. The panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A confidential record is kept, including of any action taken by the school, whether or not a complaint is upheld.

Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.20 The Standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

- 2.21 The leadership and management of the school have sufficient knowledge and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards for British schools overseas are met consistently and the well-being of pupils is actively promoted.
- 2.22 Section 3 of this report provides a more detailed evaluation of the impact of leadership and management on the pupils' learning, achievement and personal development.

3. Inspection of Educational Quality

Preface

In addition to evaluating whether or not the school met all of the Standards for British schools overseas, this inspection evaluated the **quality** of the school's work, focusing on the two key outcomes for pupils:

- the quality of the pupils' learning and achievement;
- the quality of the pupils' personal development;

Headline judgements of educational quality include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'. In addition, the text identifies clearly the impact of the curriculum, teaching, pastoral care, leadership and management on outcomes for pupils.

As ISI inspections of British schools overseas are for the benefit of the pupils, inspections aim to:

- provide objective and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and build on their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses;
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain;
- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education.

The report refers to year groups in accordance with the system most commonly used in England.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement is excellent.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
 - Building on the use of excellent assessment procedures to ensure that analysis and interpretation of data are used to enable targeted support and challenge across all areas of the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' learning and achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' learning and achievement is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils' academic and other achievements are excellent, successfully fulfilling the school's mission to deliver a broad and balanced education which enables the individual pupil to develop to his or her maximum potential in a dynamic and caring environment. The high quality of the pupils' achievements owes much to the excellent leadership and management at all levels and to proprietorial overview.
- 3.6 Pupils of all abilities display exceptional communication skills. They are thoughtful and reflective when talking to both adults and their peers. They are articulate and interpret and answer questions with considerable confidence and maturity. For example, in an English lesson in Year 4, in which the pupils were discussing the branding and marketing of sweets, a pupil responded that they provide the sensation of 'eat a rainbow and taste the rainbow'. Children in the EYFS learn to speak confidently with their teachers since they work in an environment which is rich in language. Teachers model the use of high-level vocabulary and frequently enter into conversation with children. Pupils have outstanding abilities to express themselves fluently and grammatically in speech and have a strong command of spoken English.

3.7 Effective early literacy skills are developed as a result of well-planned and interesting learning activities which enable the development of their understanding of letter sounds which pupils use highly effectively to achieve phonetically plausible writing and to start to read.

- 3.8 Pupils' writing skills, including creative writing and poetry, are of exceptionally high quality. They express themselves effectively and creatively in their extended writing. For example, pupils in Year 4 wrote persuasively to engage the reader and encourage them to take notice of the impact of deforestation as a result of the demand for palm oil. Pupils with EAL make rapid gains in learning new vocabulary as a result of imaginative teaching methods and an excellent range of resources. For example, pupils in older years quickly developed an understanding of comparative and superlative adjectives because they were thoroughly absorbed playing a game with dice and counters which challenged them to find the most appropriate adjectives to use. Pupils' reading is excellent in all age groups, and they read confidently for enjoyment as well as to gain knowledge. The oldest pupils read fluently and critically such as when evaluating source texts in history, or critically analysing a poem in French. Standards in reading and writing are extremely high overall because thorough schemes of work form the basis for systematic and well-organised learning. These high standards are in part as a result of the proprietorial provision which enables a high teacher-to-pupil ratio.
- 3.9 The pupils' attitudes to learning are of a high standard. The presentation of their work across all subjects is excellent and reflects their pride in their efforts. Pupils of all abilities work highly collaboratively as a result of the many opportunities provided to share ideas, learn from each other and develop their understanding across all subjects. Pupils relish undertaking the many and varied open-ended tasks provided and undertake their studies with enthusiasm and interest. For example, whilst developing strategies to create moving monsters, pupils in Year 3 designed ways to create differing moving parts from tongues to legs using the equipment provided in numerous different ways and considered how they could expand on their knowledge before creating the final product. Older pupils develop and refine the skills they need to study independently. This is supported by the inclusion of study skills, including self-assessment, as a regular part of lessons. Pupils demonstrate excellent higher-order thinking skills. From an early age, the teaching encourages a natural inclination to investigate and draw conclusions which develops pupils' ability to explain their reasoning. In lessons, pupils regularly take the initiative to move to challenges to broaden their knowledge and feed their curiosity and take risks, understanding that sometimes their answers will be wrong.
- Pupils display excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. 3.10 Achievement in the EYFS is excellent; children make strong progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points, abilities and needs. They gather knowledge rapidly as they explore and investigate. For example, children showed high levels of curiosity as they wondered what would appear from the mystery bag and used their understanding of size and shape to guess. From Year 1, pupils' attainment is judged to be above UK age-related expectations based on inspection evidence drawn from the observation of lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of the school's performance data. This is further supported by pupils' high levels of success at the point of transfer to their chosen secondary school. This level of attainment indicates that pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, and those who are more able, make rapid progress over time. A key factor in pupils' success is the school's highly effective assessment procedures in English and mathematics. For example, the regular analysis of pupils' phonics skills in the earlier years identifies where targeted support and challenge need to be provided and, as a result, pupils make outstanding short-term progress. Assessment procedures in other subjects do not always provide the same level of detailed information and analysis. Pupils' linguistic skills are excellent. They contribute to French lessons with confidence and a sense of purpose, strongly supported by the nurturing learning environment. Pupils in Year 6 research independently and write excellent detailed accounts of the history of a famous person in French. Scientific skills are extremely well developed, and pupils throughout the school display initiative in the planning and recording of their work.

3.11 Creative and physical skills are very well developed both through the curriculum and through the range of extra-curricular activities and themed weeks in which they participate. For example, the youngest pupils display an excellent appreciation of music as they learn to move appropriately in response to a variety of sounds, whilst the enthusiasm and commitment of older pupils enable them to perform highly successfully as a choir. Pupils display strong physical skills, for example in volleyball, dance and gymnastics. 'Topic', which is taught from Year 1, has a significant impact on pupils' excellent learning skills. For example, younger pupils of all abilities showed high levels of resilience as they attempted to make moving pictures, whilst older pupils regularly use their own time to research and develop their knowledge and understanding. In their responses to the questionnaires, almost all parents felt that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future, and most pupils felt that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make good progress, and that lessons are interesting and challenging. The robust systems in place for monitoring the teaching of the curriculum have contributed strongly to the excellent teaching throughout the school. This addresses the recommendation of the previous inspection.

- 3.12 Pupils have an excellent grasp of numeracy. For example, pupils in Year 4 quickly mastered a challenging task using critical thinking to investigate why different sizes of balloons have varying weights because of the different amount of gas within each one. Pupils are confident using practical skills, encouraged by the school's hands-on approach to teaching numeracy. From Nursery onwards, where children learn to count through much practical work, younger pupils develop excellent computation skills, and make rapid progress at all ability levels. As a result of teachers' high expectations, pupils present their mathematical working systematically and accurately. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills successfully into other areas of learning. For example, in the 'five Euro challenge', a charity event designed to encourage their enterprise skills, pupils applied their mathematical skills well when considering a wide variety of methods as to how they might return a profit, with some reaching sums in excess of 200 Euros. Older pupils demonstrate rapid, accurate and confident recall of number bonds and facts, which enable them to make excellent progress in acquiring high-level skills such as solving multi-algebraic problems and algorithms.
- 3.13 Pupils have excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils use ICT effectively to research and create presentations, and they develop a sophisticated knowledge of ICT applications. The youngest children are able to programme robotic toys whilst older pupils code successfully. Pupils who attend an ICT extra-curricular activity each week achieve extremely well in their coding skills and use of software. Pupils' progress is also facilitated by the availability and use of a wide variety of computers and electronic devices as a result of the proprietorial commitment to providing ICT resources.
- 3.14 Pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, gain valuable skills from the extra-curricular activities programme, including the timetabled themed weeks. In their responses to the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents felt that the school offers a suitable range of subjects for their children and that there is a good choice of extra-curricular activities. The themed weeks and days that take place regularly throughout the year enable pupils of all abilities to gain confidence and develop high-level skills in a variety of different disciplines. For example, music, art, dance and drama (MADD) week enables pupils to work in mixed-age groups and provides opportunities for them to display their strong performance abilities. Weekly activities such as meditation, ballet, football and also regular choir performances, a poetry week and speech and drama examinations all contribute to the strong levels of success achieved. The school supports the interaction many pupils have with organisations in Brussels, particularly the cultural events promoted by the foreign missions, as this maintains the pupils' sense of cultural identity and language. For example, this has included pupils dancing in traditional costumes at the Chinese embassy, individuals singing in opera productions at La Monnaie and at the annual Christmas concert for the royal family. Pupils' many excellent sporting achievements are both individual and team-based and are celebrated within the school community. These include playing in an international tennis tournament in Croatia, competing in hockey for a national under-11 team and in rugby competitions.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

3.16 The development of pupils' moral understanding is excellent. Pupils understand the importance of taking responsibility for their learning and behaviour and understand that the decisions they make are important determinants for their success, both academically and in terms of their relationships and well-being. For example, they understand the 'learning ladder' disciplinary approach which starts with a silent warning and extends in steps to loss of privilege and finally referral to the senior leadership team. The consistency of this approach, or as parents report 'discipline with a smile', enables pupils to reflect on the impact of their decisions on those around them, and to adjust behaviour appropriately in order to move off the 'steps'. There is an open atmosphere of co-operation where errors are accepted and forgiven by all within the school community. As a result of this, and the frequent award of house points to celebrate good behaviour, behaviour throughout the school is excellent.

- 3.17 Pupils are encouraged to make choices in all aspects of school life from choosing to undertake the 'challenge' activities provided to extend learning to making the correct decisions with regard to their behaviour both around the school and out in the local community. Older pupils respond well to teaching that supports rather than provides direct answers. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 6, they knew when to ask for help and when to persevere on their own. Pupils understand the importance of their good conduct when undertaking off-site visits, for example the regular visits to the sports centre, visits to the forest, and conducting interviews with passers-by during Brussels week. Pupils switch easily from collaborative working to complete silence when required. During nonstructured times of the day and during playtimes, pupils' social awareness for each other and adults is excellent. Pupils stop and start playing at the ring of the school bell, and this achieves a common goal of 'safe play for you and safe play for me'. Pupils are courteous, and excellent manners are modelled from the youngest to the oldest pupil. In their responses to the questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour, and every pupil felt that the school encourages them to behave well and that they know the sanctions for poor behaviour.
- 3.18 The pupils make excellent progress in developing their social skills. Important contributory factors are the positive role models provided by the school's leaders and staff which permeate the school. Pupils co-operate highly effectively with one another for common purpose in house competitions. For example, 'Spelling Bee' house challenges help pupils to enjoy solving problems whilst having fun within a culture of healthy competition. Pupils demonstrate a real sense of fair play and sensitivity towards others and state that they would not intentionally hurt anyone. Older pupils assert maturely that they consider it a privilege to help to look after younger pupils, and that new pupils are welcomed into the community of the school with ease and care.
- 3.19 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including online, strongly promoted through all staff ensuring pupils from the youngest age assess risk and become aware of the importance of keeping to rules for their own safety and the safety of others. For example, when moving around the school, they always abide by the rule to hold the rail on the staircases to avoid falling. This is also emphasised through the establishment of familiar routines in the EYFS and a comprehensive PSHE programme throughout the school. Pupils are aware of the merits of a 'healthy me and my healthy mind'. Girls in Years 5 and 6 particularly value the additional pastoral care and support provided in a bespoke club for girls. This includes awareness of online safety and cyber-bullying. 'E-safety' is embedded in the pupils' online learning at school and informs their online safety at home too. In their response to the questionnaire, all pupils agreed that they feel safe in school whilst almost all said they understand how to stay safe online. All pupils appreciate the need for a balanced diet and that physical activity is an important aspect of staying fit. The school's 'healthy week' promotes a raft of fun activities to appeal to the pupils. Organic food production, 'wake up and

- shake up' and 'beep testing' all help to educate the school community about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.
- 3.20 Pupils display high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence whilst interacting and engaging with others, and undertaking activities that encourage independence and exploration. For example, in the youngest years they plant seed potatoes and independently consider how they may be best supported in growing, resulting in a sign that advised others not to touch.
- 3.21 At play, pupils are relaxed, developing their own games, taking turns in leading activities and enjoying the playtime equipment. They use the opportunities provided for both peaceful activities such as drawing and active activities, such as swinging on the climbing equipment and developing their skills with a basketball. Parents and pupils are very clear that the strong focus on community ensures that pupils with EAL and those new to the school are comfortable in their environment and happy to join in all activities, rapidly developing in confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are resilient, strongly supported by teaching staff who use praise and rewards to motivate and encourage pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and show great determination to complete tasks. Outstanding leadership and management, and the care of each staff member for individuals within the school community contribute strongly to the outcomes for pupils. They thrive on challenge and approach activities with enthusiasm from the EYFS onwards knowing they are in safe hands if they find things difficult. Pupils respond positively to marking comments and say that they find both teaching comments and their regular self-assessment helpful and that this highlights their progress and areas to be improved. This successfully addresses the recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 3.22 Pupils flourish and are proud of the diversity of their economic, religious and cultural backgrounds. They are aware of the values and traditions of other cultures, as well as their own, as a result of themed activity days that draw on their international backgrounds and knowledge of situations in different countries. As a result of the school's active promotion of diversity, which includes teaching about different countries and religions and its pastoral and inclusive ethos, pupils embrace a harmonious acceptance of other faiths and cultures. In their response to the questionnaires, the vast majority of pupils and parents said that the school encourages and promotes respect for other people and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3.23 Pupils contribute strongly to the local community by taking part in local festivals, singing at the annual carol service and taking the challenge of the 'Mud Run' organised by the BJAB parent-teacher association. Pupils are proud of their efforts to support charities, such as bringing in filled shoe boxes of food for the homeless and less fortunate at Christmas, and leading fund-raising events such as cake sales and sponsored scooter rides to support an inner-city school in Manila.
- 3.24 Pupils of all ages demonstrate a strong ability to appreciate the non-material aspects of life and their environment. The encouragement to learn for themselves enables pupils to be open-minded and curious about others and the world around them. Children gaze with wonder as they notice the recently hatched ladybirds, observe the trail of a snail across an apple, watch caterpillars changing and delight in the fact the tadpoles have grown legs, using magnifying glasses to see more clearly. Older pupils listen quietly to music as they work and display a sophisticated spiritual awareness during the commemoration of the end of hostilities in World War One, which included a sensitive recital of In Flanders Field.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the proprietor and the chair of the advisory board. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick and injured pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Sara Wiggins Reporting inspector

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