

**Ballerup High School
South Lanarkshire Council**

22 January 2002

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Inspection of Standards and Quality in Ballerup High School South Lanarkshire

1. Introduction

Ballerup High School was inspected in September and October 2001 as part of a national sample of secondary education.

The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. HM Inspectors evaluated learning, teaching and attainment, examined pupils' work and interviewed staff and pupils. The subjects included in the inspection were English, mathematics, modern languages, geography and home economics. HM Inspectors also evaluated the quality of support for pupils, including arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils and child protection, and aspects of guidance and support for learning. In evaluating how well the school and departments were managed, HM Inspectors assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents. They met the Chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents.

2. The school

Ballerup High School is a non-denominational secondary school which serves the Greenhills area of East Kilbride.

At the time of the inspection the roll was 487. Around 25% were entitled to free school meals.

Parents' views

Almost all of the parents who responded to the questionnaire had positive views about the school. They thought that:

- the school was well led and was good at explaining its work to them;
- school reports and parents' evenings were helpful and informative, and parents were made to feel welcome in the school;
- the school set high standards for pupils' attainment and explained these well to parents; and
- the staff showed concern for the care and welfare of their children.

Around two-thirds of parents thought that the school had a good reputation in the community. Only one third felt that the school buildings were well maintained.

Ethos

The school had a very good ethos. Pupils and staff were proud of their school, and parents and visitors were made to feel welcome. Teachers displayed a high level of commitment to their pupils and many organised clubs and activities beyond the school day. They placed strong emphasis on attainment and appreciated the support provided by the senior management team. Relationships amongst staff were good and morale was high. Regular assemblies provided opportunities to develop the pupils' personal and social education and included appropriate arrangements for religious observance. Attendance was in line with national levels.

Pupils were generally well behaved, polite and friendly. The school provided additional support for a small number of pupils experiencing behavioural problems.

Pupils took advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including team sports, clubs and musical events. Senior pupils were given appropriate responsibilities through acting as prefects and serving on the pupil council. Many were involved in the befriending scheme to support younger pupils.

School and community

The school had very good links with parents and the wider community. Notable features included:

- the home school partnership arrangements;
- helpful parents' evenings and curriculum events;
- a very well-presented handbook, a range of newsletters and other helpful information for parents;
- the supportive School Board and parent-teacher association; and
- consultation with parents and pupils when identifying priorities for development.

The school provided good reports to parents on their children's progress. It should improve consistency by ensuring that all reports provide clear information on pupils' next steps in learning

Accommodation

The overall quality of accommodation was fair. Most departments had sufficient classrooms, but in some areas space was limited. The buildings were well maintained and free from vandalism, litter and graffiti. However, persistent water penetration had caused damage to floors and ceilings, and the effectiveness of heating and ventilation varied across the school. The condition of fittings and furniture in some departments was poor. The school had immediate plans to improve the condition of the pupils' toilets.

Staffing and resources

Overall, the provision of staff was good. However, continuity in pupils' learning had been affected in some subjects by changes due to teachers' absences. Staff had a good range of experience and expertise. Non-teaching staff made very strong contributions to the work of the school, although there was a lack of auxiliary support for home economics.

The provision of resources was good. Most departments had good quality materials, equipment and text books, but some were becoming out-of-date. Facilities for information and communications technology (ICT) were good. Departments had access to the Internet through the school network. The library resource centre was very well organised and used. The librarian made a valuable contribution to pupils' learning experiences and to the life of the school.

The school managed its devolved finances very well. The budget was allocated in a fair and open way and the head teacher had encouraged bids from departments for additional resources from a curriculum development fund.

3. How well are pupils performing?**Overall quality of attainment**

The overall quality of pupils' attainment was good at S3/S4 and fair at S1/S2 and S5/S6. While attainment in coursework was generally good, the work set was not always sufficiently challenging and the overall pace of pupils' learning was sometimes too slow. The school was giving high priority to improving attainment and there were recent improvements in some areas. These included better performances in reading, writing and mathematics at S1/S2 and improvements in Standard Grade performance at S3/S4.

**Scottish
Qualifications
Authority (SQA)
Awards**

The following comments are based on examination data for the three year period 1999 to 2001.

- The proportion of pupils achieving five or more Standard Grade awards was above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more Credit awards was below the national average.
- At Higher Grade, the proportion of pupils gaining three or more A-C awards was consistently below the national average.
- A small number of candidates had been presented for the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) in a range of subjects. Most achieved A-C awards in 1999, and all did so in 2000.
- The proportion of S5/S6 pupils gaining three or more National Certificate (NC) modules had been around the national average.

Information on attainment in those subjects inspected is given later in the report. Significant features of attainment in the subjects not inspected were as follows.

- The percentage of S4 pupils achieving Credit awards in art and design had improved and was well above the national average in 2001.
- At Standard Grade, pupils had performed less well in modern studies than in their other subjects.
- All pupils in S5/S6 presented for Higher Grade art and design had gained A-C awards, with a high proportion gaining A awards.

**Information and
communications
technology**

The following were notable features of pupils' proficiency in information and communications technology (ICT).

- Pupils in English and in the S1/S2 'flexibility' course could research websites to enhance their writing tasks and download appropriate graphics.
- In art and design and technical education classes, pupils had used Internet sources and digital camera images to produce high quality displays.
- Pupils in home economics made effective use of the Internet and CD-ROMs for their S2 investigations.
- In geography, pupils in S3 made good use of the learning resource centre in the library to enhance their understanding of weather patterns and forecasting.

As the provision of resources improves and more staff benefit from New Opportunities Fund ICT training, the school should ensure that more departments make use of ICT to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

4. How well are the inspected departments performing?

English

Attainment

The overall quality of attainment was good in S3/S4 and fair in S1/S2 and S5/S6. Pupils' performance in coursework was good from S3 to S6. At S1/S2 the majority of pupils attained appropriate standards in reading. Fewer than half did so in listening, talking and writing. However, pupils made good progress beyond their level of attainment on entry to S1. Pupils' performance at Standard Grade had been well below national average, but had improved in 2001, when almost all pupils achieved at least a General award. In both Higher Grade and NC modules about half of the pupils did not achieve an award. CSYS results had been good.

Courses	Courses were good at each stage. They should be further improved to ensure that pupils are required to produce larger amounts of work.
Learning and teaching	The quality of teaching was good. Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations and used questioning well to challenge and motivate pupils and encourage group discussion. The quality of pupils' learning and of teachers' planning to meet their learning needs was fair. Most pupils worked conscientiously, but some made little progress in classwork. They needed more specific guidance on analytic reading and writing for various purposes. Teachers should set higher expectations for the pace of learning and the amount and quality of pupils' work. There were good arrangements for formal assessment at each stage.
Management and quality assurance	The principal teacher administered the department effectively. However, he needed to address significant weaknesses in management. These weaknesses included the planning and implementation of action to improve learning, to meet pupils' needs, and to improve teaching resources from S1 to S4. He should also focus the department's self-evaluation and monitoring more sharply on the quality of learning and teaching.
Priorities for action	The department should improve pupils' attainment, especially in S1/S2 and S5/S6, by improving learning and teaching and by planning specific action to meet pupils' needs more fully. The principal teacher should give a more positive lead in the planning and implementation of action for improvement.
Mathematics	
Attainment	The overall quality of attainment in S1 to S6 was good. At all stages, most pupils were coping well with their coursework. By the end of S2, the majority of pupils were achieving appropriate national standards. Almost all pupils in S1/S2 had improved significantly their level

of attainment from primary school. At Standard Grade, pupils' performance at Credit level was below the national average. At Higher, the proportion of pupils achieving an A-C award was around the national average. In 2000, most of those presented for Intermediate 1 and 2 achieved an A-C award. Most of the small number who were presented for CSYS in 1998 and 1999 achieved an A-C award.

Courses

Courses from S1 to S6 were good.

Learning and teaching

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Teachers gave clear explanations and most used homework effectively. However, some relied too heavily on a textbook. More opportunities should be taken to include the use of ICT in lessons. At all stages the setting of teaching groups in line with pupils' attainment helped teachers to meet pupils' learning needs. Assessment procedures were very well organised in S1/S2, but arrangements in S3 to S6 needed to be reviewed.

Management and quality assurance

The principal teacher was absent for part of the inspection and had been absent for much of the previous session. Major weaknesses in the management of the department required to be addressed. Self-evaluation was fair and there was insufficient emphasis on the monitoring of pupils' performance across all classes. The assistant principal teacher had supported the department very well in the absence of the principal teacher. Good progress had been made with the priorities contained in last session's development plan.

Priorities for action

Staff should review their approaches to teaching and learning to include more use of ICT and to improve the arrangements for assessment in S3 to S6. The principal teacher should systematically monitor all aspects of the work of the department.

Modern Languages

Attainment

The overall quality of attainment was good in S5/S6 and fair in S1 to S4. Pupils from S1 to S4 were performing well in their coursework, but teachers could have higher expectations of what pupils could achieve. Most pupils were making good progress in listening and reading. Speaking and writing were less well developed. In Standard Grade, the percentage of pupils achieving Credit awards in German was below the national average. In 2001, pupils achieved better results than in their other subjects. At S5/S6, speaking skills continued to be under-developed. Most of the small number of pupils presented for Higher German had achieved an A-C award.

Courses

The quality of courses at all levels was good. The principal teacher needed to provide more detailed programmes of work. Teachers required to offer more opportunities for pupils to practise oral and writing skills.

Learning and teaching

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. Lessons were well planned and there was some good direct teaching. However, staff should develop ways of helping pupils to recall previous learning. Most pupils worked well, but they had insufficient opportunity to be actively involved in their learning. Teachers should ensure that pupils at all levels are appropriately challenged. At all stages, arrangements for assessment were good.

Management and quality assurance

The principal teacher was experienced, knowledgeable and committed. He had led the department effectively through a difficult period of instability in staffing and had provided good support to staff. He now needed to focus more sharply on seeking improvements in learning, teaching and attainment, and in developing more rigorous approaches to self-evaluation.

Priorities for action	Teachers should increase their expectations of pupils' achievement and ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. The principal teacher should develop more detailed programmes of work and more rigorous approaches to self-evaluation.
Geography	
Attainment	The overall quality of attainment was good in S1/S2 and S5/S6 and fair in S3/S4. At all stages most pupils performed well in their coursework, but the needs of higher-attaining pupils in S3/S4 were not always well met. At Standard Grade, the percentage of pupils gaining a Credit award was consistently below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving band A-C awards at Higher was above the national average.
Courses	Courses were good in S1/S2 and S5/S6, and fair in S3/S4. The S1/S2 course gave due attention to Scottish geography and the balance between physical and human geography. At S3/S4 some of the units had been well developed to meet the needs of all pupils, but for some higher-achieving pupils there needed to be greater challenge in the tasks set. Commendably, the department was placing more emphasis on developing pupils' enquiry and mapwork skills.
Learning and teaching	The overall quality of learning and teaching was good, and some lessons were very good. There were examples of effective direct teaching, and the quality of explanation and questioning was high. Pupils responded well to the pace of learning and the variety of tasks. Teachers used praise effectively to support learning. Assessment results were used in S1/S2 to monitor progress and to direct pupils to appropriate exercises. However, for some higher-achieving pupils, especially at S3/S4, the pace of learning and the challenge offered should be increased.

Management and quality assurance	The department was well led by the experienced principal teacher who was hard-working and committed to her subject. She had given a good lead in introducing new National Qualifications units and courses, and in improving units and profiles in S1/S2. Staff worked effectively as a team to improve attainment. Good progress had been made in implementing the targets in the development plan, but statements of resources and timescales and methods of judging success needed clarification.
Priorities for action	Teachers should continue to implement strategies to improve attainment, and extend the progress checks used at S1/S2 to all stages to ensure better feedback to pupils. The principal teacher should complete the modifications to the Standard Grade course so that it meets the needs of all pupils.
Home Economics	
Attainment	The overall quality of attainment was very good at S3/S4 and good at S1/S2 and S5/S6. Most pupils were performing well in their coursework. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards was well above the national average and pupils performed significantly better than in their other subjects. Most pupils presented at Higher over the last three years had achieved an A-C award. A majority of pupils had achieved success in NC modules from 1997 to 1999. Almost all of the first group of pupils presented for Health and Food Technology at Intermediate 1 in 2001 achieved an A or B award.
Courses	The S1/S2 course was good. It was being revised further to increase the focus on technology. Courses at S3 to S6 were up-to-date and very well planned.
Learning and teaching	The overall quality of learning and teaching was very good. Teachers planned lessons very well, made very effective use of questioning and discussion and gave

pupils constructive feedback on their progress. They were making increasing use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils' interest in their course activities was high. Their varied learning needs were generally very well met and teachers set appropriate targets for their learning. Staff should continue to review the level of challenge and pace of learning at S1/S2. There were good arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress, with improvements being made at S1/S2.

Management and quality assurance

The principal teacher provided very effective leadership and staff worked very well together. A good range of measures was in place to evaluate the work of the department. Priorities for development reflected the department's commitment to maintaining high standards of achievement. While there were weaknesses in the detail of the development plan, staff were making good progress in implementing priorities.

Priorities for action

Teachers should continue to review the level of challenge and pace of learning at S1/S2. They should increase further the use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning at all stages.

5. How good is the curriculum?

The overall quality of the curriculum was very good.

In S1/S2, the school provided a broad and balanced range of courses. The structure of the curriculum had been revised as part of the school's aim to improve pupils' achievements. The school had reduced the number of teachers by whom pupils were taught each week. There were good links with primary schools and the organisation of classes in some subjects took account of pupils' prior attainment. A 'flexibility' course had been introduced to improve standards of literacy and numeracy and to develop pupils' ICT skills. As the school

continues to develop this course, it should improve aspects of planning and delivery, and of reporting to parents.

Almost all pupils in S3/S4 studied eight Standard Grade subjects in addition to physical education, religious and moral education and personal and social education. A small number took only seven Standard Grade courses and staff used the balance of time to help raise pupils' attainment in these subjects. A few pupils were presented for Intermediate level units instead of Standard Grade.

In S5/S6, the school offered a wide range of courses leading to National Qualifications at different levels. Some of these were being made available through distance learning arrangements with a further education college.

6. How good is learning and teaching?

The overall quality of learning and teaching was good. The majority of the lessons seen were good and some were very good. There were no major weaknesses in any lessons. Further information about lesson evaluations is given in the appendix.

Teachers planned lessons well, gave clear instructions and explanations, and used a range of approaches to stimulate pupils' interest. There were good examples of direct teaching, with effective use of questioning to involve pupils and check their understanding. Most teachers set regular homework, but there were inconsistencies in the quality of tasks set and in expectations of pupils' responses. Teachers had good relationships with pupils and most made effective use of praise. Most pupils worked conscientiously in class and responded well,

especially when set challenging tasks. However, some were not always well motivated and made little progress in classwork.

Teachers were committed to improving attainment. They provided additional support at lunchtimes and after school in a range of subjects. However, in some classes the pace of work and levels of challenge were not always high enough, especially for higher-attaining pupils. Teachers should continue to develop approaches to matching tasks and the pace of lessons more closely to pupils' needs. The headteacher had implemented very good individual target-setting procedures to monitor pupils' progress.

7. How well are pupils supported?

Care and welfare	Staff concern for the care and welfare of pupils was a strength of the school. A number of teachers, including guidance staff, took on additional responsibilities for supporting pupils. The school had put in place sound procedures for managing child protection issues and for dealing with incidents where children's health and safety might be at risk. These included an appropriate emphasis on countering bullying and on drugs education.
Guidance	<p>The overall quality of guidance and pastoral care was very good. Positive features included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the commitment of guidance staff and their knowledge of their pupils;• the individual target-setting approaches adopted to raise pupils' aspirations and achievement;• the attention paid to monitoring pupil progress at all stages;

- the contacts with parents and links with employers;
and
- the effective liaison with primary schools.

Commendably, the department had begun a systematic revision of the personal and social education (PSE) programme, to ensure better progression in pupils' learning. Overall, the programme provided good coverage of topics, including health and careers education and life skills. As guidance staff complete their revision of the programme, they should maintain a close focus on learning and teaching and build appropriate guidance for teachers into lesson plans.

Curricular and vocational guidance was very good, with effective involvement of the careers officer and the school librarian. There was a growing range of events to encourage pupils' understanding of the world of work, including work experience and mock interviews. Some course choice units required review, to include updated materials and more user-friendly pupil guides. Guidance staff were very effective in maintaining regular contact with pupils and parents to monitor progress and encourage achievement.

The depute headteacher led the guidance team very well. All guidance staff were hardworking and worked well as a team. They had made a good start to evaluating the department's work. In the longer term, the school should evaluate the overall effect of its various initiatives on raising pupils' achievement.

Priorities for action Guidance staff should complete their intended revision of PSE to ensure appropriate progression. They should include the quality of learning and teaching in PSE lessons in their evaluation. Senior managers should ensure appropriate clerical support for guidance staff.

Support for learning

The overall quality of support for learning was good. Notable features included:

- the approach to target-setting and tracking attainment;
- the support given to S1/S2 pupils in literacy and numeracy skills;
- the work with a group of S3/S4 pupils to support their learning across the curriculum; and
- the flexible approach to behaviour support.

A sense of teamwork was a strong feature among learning support and guidance staff and external personnel. The overall quality of planning was good. Support for learning staff used an effective range of strategies to meet pupils' needs. However, teachers in English and mathematics were not yet collaborating fully with learning support and guidance staff in planning joint approaches to support pupils' learning. The effectiveness of co-operative teaching had not been fully evaluated. The school maintained its Records of Needs and individualised educational plans very well.

The Special Educational Needs Unit

The education authority had recently established a unit in the school for pupils with special educational needs. Four S1 pupils were presently in the unit. They attended mainstream classes except for English and mathematics. Staff worked well to integrate the pupils into classes. They were promoting attainment through target-setting and by providing a curriculum appropriate to pupils' needs. Parents were involved in reviews of pupils' progress. The special educational needs auxiliary provided very good support. The acting principal teacher of the unit provided good leadership and support to staff, and showed strong commitment to the pupils. With the acting APT of learning support, she was supporting curriculum and other developments across the school.

They used a variety of appropriate procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the unit.

The depute headteacher had a very sound overview of both the support for learning department and the unit. The school intended reviewing remits and responsibilities in the light of the establishment of the new unit, to ensure that clear strategic planning was in place for its future development.

Priorities for action As soon as possible, the school should agree the long-term remits of the promoted staff. Staff should continue to develop a co-operative approach to planning with the English and Mathematics departments. They should evaluate more rigorously the effectiveness of co-operative teaching across departments.

8. How well is the school managed?

Overall management and leadership

The headteacher provided very good leadership. He was strongly committed to the school and had a clear vision for its development. He had been successful in introducing a range of strategies aimed at supporting pupils in their learning and raising attainment. He was also taking action to raise the profile of the school within the local community. He had very good relationships with staff, pupils and parents and communicated very effectively with them. He had fostered a strong sense of teamwork among senior managers and across the school. Staff demonstrated a shared commitment to the strategies for raising attainment.

The depute and assistant headteachers provided very good support to the headteacher. All senior managers had appropriate remits, which were reviewed regularly to develop and extend their skills. They carried out their responsibilities for quality assurance very effectively. Most heads of department provided good leadership and

encouraged teamwork within their departments. Senior teachers had appropriate remits which they carried out successfully.

The school had a very clear set of aims which it used to evaluate its work. It had a good range of clearly presented policies.

Staff development and review

The school had very good arrangements for staff development and review. Implementation of the education authority's procedures was well established and staff had responded positively to the process. In identifying staff development needs, very good account was taken of school and departmental priorities. Very good arrangements were in place to provide appropriate staff development activities. These included attendance at training courses and conferences, involvement in school working groups and participation in courses leading to additional professional qualifications.

School development planning

The school development plan was good. The planning process was based upon systematic reviews of progress with the previous plan and the results of consultations with staff, pupils and parents. Appropriate targets had been established which took into account national and local authority priorities and supported the overall aim of raising attainment. Some targets needed clearer measures for judging success. Overall, staff had made good progress in addressing the priorities identified in the school and department plans. The content and quality of department plans were too variable. Senior managers should continue to work with departments where required to improve the quality of plans.

Approaches to improving quality

The school's approaches to evaluating its work were good. Well-established procedures included the thorough analysis of examination results, and the use of information gathered to set targets for every pupil. These procedures were linked to a system of annual reviews with heads of departments, using clear agendas with the

focus on raising attainment. Development planning also took account of the results of these reviews. The school was beginning to use performance indicators to assist in the systematic evaluation of its work and to help identify planning priorities. Some departments had good systems in place but others were less rigorous in monitoring and evaluating their work. Senior managers had established effective links with their departments and the school was reintroducing formal observation of classroom practice. The school needed to develop procedures to monitor the implementation and quality of the 'flexibility' course in S1/S2.

9. How well does the school perform overall?

Overall, the school provided a good quality of education. The very good ethos and the commitment of staff to supporting all pupils ensured a sound basis on which to plan improvements. Raising attainment had been established as a key priority, and a number of appropriate strategies had been implemented to achieve this aim. These included changes to courses in S1/S2, curricular innovations to address specific problems and a very thorough target-setting process for all pupils.

Key strengths

- The school's ethos and the range of extra-curricular activities.
- The staff's commitment to their pupils and the life and work of the school.
- The strong partnership with parents and the wider community, including the home-school partnership arrangements.
- The quality of guidance and pastoral care, and the focus on monitoring pupils' progress.

- The leadership of the headteacher and the effectiveness of the senior management team, notably in the commitment to raising attainment and target-setting.
- The effectiveness of provision for staff development and review.

Main points for action

In addition to addressing the priorities for action identified in this report, the school and education authority should act on the following recommendations.

- The school and education authority should address the accommodation issues identified in this report.
- The school should continue to develop the target-setting procedures to maintain the improvements in attainment.
- Staff should ensure that the pace of lessons and levels of expectation are consistently high in all departments.
- Departments should increase the use of ICT to enhance the quality of learning and teaching.
- The school should continue to monitor the quality and review the impact of initiatives introduced at S1/S2 to improve pupils' attainment.
- Departments should improve the quality of their development plans.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations. The school and education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main points for action in the report and to share that plan with parents.

Jim Bruce
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Western Division

22 January 2002

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- The school's ethos
- Communication with parents
- Partnership with parents and the School Board
- The school's management of devolved finances
- The structure of the curriculum
- Implementation of Special Educational Needs legislation
- Guidance role in monitoring pupils' progress and attainment
- Quality of pastoral care
- Quality of curricular and vocational guidance
- Effectiveness of leadership of the school
- Effectiveness of promoted staff and senior teachers
- The school's arrangements for development and review of its staff

We judged the following to be *good*

- Provision of staff
- Provision of materials and equipment
- Organisation and use of resources and space
- Effectiveness of the learning support
- The school's approach to evaluating its own work
- The school development plan
- Implementing the school development plan

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Provision of accommodation and facilities

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category

Quality of lessons observed

HMI also evaluated the quality of the lessons observed. The overall quality of lessons was very good in 36% of cases, good in 54% and fair in 10%. There were no unsatisfactory lessons.

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Executive Director (Education Resources), local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the office at the address below or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our web site:
www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Frank Crawford, HMCI whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

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