

The Compass

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134373
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	381679
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Fran Berry
Headteacher	Allan Wood
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed 14 teachers and tutors. One lesson was led by outside providers. Meetings were held with the chair of the management committee, staff, students and a parent. Students' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from six parents and carers, 20 staff and 21 students were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective the centre is in ensuring that all students make the progress they are capable of.
- The impact on progress for the small number of students who do not attend regularly enough.
- How well teachers ensure that students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- The effectiveness of the management committee in challenging the centre to improve, particularly the quality of teaching and progress.

Information about the school

The Compass is a centre that caters for students who are at risk of being excluded from their mainstream settings. Nearly all remain on the roll of their mainstream schools. A small number of students attend full time, but many students are supported through outreach or are admitted for short periods of time to help them develop the skills they need to remain in their mainstream settings. The centre supports students with medical needs also. Twelve students have statements of special educational needs. The centre has established a primary unit which supports a small number of Key Stage 1 and 2 students, many of whom have very complex needs. Almost all students are of White British heritage and there are more boys than girls. At the time of the inspection, there was a small number of students in the care of the local authority.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Compass is a good pupil referral unit. A strength of the provision is the high-quality curriculum, which is very student-centred. Strong links with colleges, outside providers and other agencies have enabled the centre to ensure that activities are tailored to meet the needs of each individual. The activities are adapted well to ensure that each student's skills are effectively developed. Students enjoy their time at the centre clearly because of the good range of activities that they can engage in. The very good links with parents and carers have enabled staff to work closely with families to help the vast majority of students to improve their appreciation of education and, as a result, improve their attendance. A small minority of students, despite every effort made by the centre, do not attend regularly enough. As a result, overall attendance figures are low. For those students, progress is no better than satisfactory and for a tiny proportion of them it is unsatisfactory.

Care, guidance and support are effective in enabling students to develop their personal and social skills well and learn how to be part of a community. Students' behaviour is good. Students new to the centre take time to settle, but, gradually, respond well to the centre's high expectations. Older students are generally sensible and mature. That is a key reason why many return successfully to their mainstream settings. Students talk very positively about all the centre has done for them and how much they have improved.

When they arrive at the centre, many of the students are very disaffected and have little commitment to learning. However, by the time they leave many have gained GCSEs and other forms of accreditation. That represents good progress for most students and outstanding progress for a few. Students benefit from small class groups and value the positive relationships they have with staff. Teaching is good overall and most staff ensure that work is always matched to students' different abilities. In a very small minority of teaching, planning does not take full account of students' needs. Occasionally, there is not an appropriate level of challenge for all students and, as a result, not all students have a clear grasp of what they need to do to improve.

The senior leadership team has developed well since the previous inspection. Much has been achieved in improving the quality of teaching and establishing more effective systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress. Regular meetings involving all staff ensure that the progress of each individual student is monitored closely. As a result, all have equal access and opportunity to all the centre offers. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and so there is a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Continual reviews by staff of the work they do ensure that the centre is quick to address any areas of weakness. Those factors, together with positive support from the newly established management

committee, contribute to the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement. The management committee is fully supportive of the centre, but receives insufficient information about the achievements of the different groups of students who attend the centre. That restricts the management committee's ability to challenge and monitor the centre effectively to ensure that all students are making the progress they should.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teachers' planning by ensuring that it takes full account consistently of the different needs of the students in each lesson and that all students have a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve.
- Ensure that the management committee has a clear overview of students' progress, in order to monitor the effectiveness of the centre.
- Improve the attendance of the small minority of students who are still not attending on a regular basis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of students varies from year to year, but is average overall. Many students have been out of school for long periods of time and this has led to gaps in their knowledge and understanding. However, the vast majority make good progress and achieve well. Many of the students in last year's cohort gained GCSEs, entry level qualifications and functional skills accreditation, enabling them to gain places at college and on training courses or move into employment successfully. There is no evidence of any group of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in the care of the local authority, achieving less well than their peers.

In lessons, students are keen to show off how much they have learnt. For example, a student was able to identify how long it takes for the moon to orbit the earth, while in history, students talked knowledgeably about the conditions for soldiers in the First World War. Students' enthusiasm for the very good range of activities was very evident when they talked about all they could do when on outdoor activities. In an off-site lesson, students, using traditional materials, produced high-quality wooden bowls successfully. Good team work and effective use of resources supported Key Stage 2 students to develop a clear understanding of the values of the Olympic movement.

In lessons, such as in food technology, students show a clear awareness of healthy eating and this is reflected in their increasingly good choices of healthy foods. There is great enthusiasm for the physical activities on offer and students are proud of their successes, such as those achieved on outdoor activities. They value being part of a community and make a good contribution to the centre. Students recognise that their views are valued, especially when decisions are made about the activities and courses they will do while at the centre. Students are involved in the local community, for example, mowing lawns for old people and contributing to the

Christmas shoe box appeal. Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the strong curriculum and the positive relationships they have with staff. There is a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and behaviour is good. Students say they feel safe and know that if they have any concerns they can talk to staff.

Attendance for the vast majority of students is much improved from their previous settings. However, there is a small minority of students who still do not attend regularly. That prevents them from making the progress they should. When they do attend, clearly, those students enjoy being in the centre, but, for a variety of external reasons, they struggle to attend on a regular basis. The good progress the vast majority of students make in their personal development and in their basic skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of education, employment and training.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are characterised by good relations between staff and students that set a positive tone for learning. Staff make clear to students the skills they will learn during the lesson and are effective in reviewing the work covered at the end of the lesson. Teachers’ subject knowledge is often used well to make lessons interesting. For example, in a lesson on the First World War, a good range of resources caught students’ imagination successfully. In an excellent art lesson, the teacher and student shared their views on a range of different artists’ portrayal of flowers. The student was confident to express her likes and dislikes, such as explaining why she did not like the work of William Morris. The range of resources and excellent subject knowledge ensured the student developed her knowledge and understanding extremely well. Staff work with students often in small groups and ensure work is matched well to students’ abilities. Occasionally, staff do not use their good

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

knowledge of students to plan work that is suitably challenging for all students. The marking of work is often detailed, but, occasionally, teachers fail to inform students about what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum does much to support students, both academically and socially, and enhances greatly their enjoyment of learning. Students appreciate the flexibility of the centre in meeting their individual needs. Each student’s timetable is different and tailored specifically to their interests and skills. Those factors contribute significantly to students’ increased interest in learning. The use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is being developed appropriately across the curriculum.

The very caring nature of staff, together with a good understanding of students’ special needs, ensures that the care and support of students is effective. Excellent communication with parents and carers and positive links with a wide range of agencies enable all students to be supported successfully to access and attend education and make progress, both academically and in their personal development. The centre works extremely closely with parents and carers, ensuring they are well informed of all that goes on. Parents and carers are involved in decisions about their children’s education and ensuring the curriculum meets their needs. Those links, together with the good partnerships with multi-agencies, local schools and colleges and a range of agencies, support students very well. Staff at the centre are committed to the students and do a great deal to get them into the centre and attend more often. For the vast majority of students, the strategies have been very effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders provide a strong sense of direction and this has been strengthened effectively through the appointment of a deputy headteacher. That has enabled the centre to improve at a good pace, with the support of all staff. Systems for monitoring provision have been used well to identify any weaknesses and take quick action. For example, senior leaders have successfully ensured that the use of learning objectives and plenaries in lessons is consistent across the centre. The centre has achieved much in gathering a range of data and, through weekly meetings with all staff, checks the progress of students on an individual basis. Staff are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and inclusion for all and discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

The management committee has only been in place for a short time, but has good

knowledge and expertise regarding students’ special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, it is hampered in challenging the centre more effectively because of the lack of detailed information concerning the progress of different groups. Good attention is paid to safeguarding arrangements and the vetting of staff is thorough. The centre has successfully raised its profile within the community and very good links with mainstream schools, colleges and outside providers have been established. That has had a very positive impact in terms of students’ personal development, as well as improving the range of opportunities for them. The centre is actively developing its community cohesion in terms of national links to provide students with a better understanding of life in a multicultural society. Links with the community are good in many respects and the centre has planned carefully to develop community cohesion further through developing closer links with other communities, both globally and nationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A much lower proportion of parents and carers than usual completed the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses, however, were extremely positive and many wrote detailed comments. Their views can be summarised by one parent, who wrote ‘The dedicated team at the Compass has provided my child with outstanding support, encouragement and education. The systems for multi-agency working are exceptional and we feel very lucky to attend this excellent school.’

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Compass to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received six completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 81 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	17	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	33	3	50	0	0	1	17
The teaching is good at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	3	50	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	33	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Compass, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 0QU

Thank you so much for being friendly and helpful when we came to visit you recently. We enjoyed meeting you very much and a special thank you to those of you who took time to talk to us. Thank you, too, to those who cooked lunch on the first day. It was delicious!

The centre is ensuring that you get a good education. Many of you attend well and this helps you to make good progress in your learning. The small number of you who do not attend so regularly are not achieving as well as you could. The curriculum you are offered is good and enables you to have a very wide range of experiences. You told us how much you enjoy all the different activities you can do. Teaching has lots of strengths and clearly you get on well with your teachers. You work hard in lessons generally and generally behave well. You have a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles. You say you feel safe in the centre and that you can talk to staff if you have any concerns.

We have asked the centre to help some of you attend more regularly. In order to make teaching even better, we have asked teachers to make sure the work is matched to your individual needs and that they make sure you know what you have to do to improve. We have also asked senior leaders to provide the management committee with more detail about how well you are doing in your work, so that it can challenge staff to do even better. You can help the centre to improve by always attending regularly and always trying your best.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascal
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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