

The Compass

307A, Chickerell Road, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 0QU

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership for this rapidly improving school. She ensures that high expectations for students' achievement underpin all aspects of the school's work. As a result, students make good progress and achieve well in a range of subjects.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school is a safe, supportive and caring place in which to work and learn. This enables students to rebuild their confidence and to establish very strong relationships with staff that are based on trust and mutual respect.
- When students join the school their barriers to learning are quickly identified. Very effective and personal support is swiftly implemented and this enables many students to successfully return to mainstream education.
- Teaching is good. Students who have previously been reluctant learners or who have missed much of their education are skilfully encouraged to try their best and attempt new work.
- Outreach work is extremely effective in helping reluctant attenders to access education and to achieve success in a range of qualifications.
- Students typically behave well in lessons. They are keen to do their best and enjoy being successful. Around the school, students' behaviour is polite and respectful. They are proud of their school and appreciative of the opportunities provided for them to re-engage in learning.
- The range of subjects on offer is very well suited to students' needs and talents. Courses are well matched to their aspirations for future education or employment. Consequently, most of those who stay at the school for Year 11 move on to college placements or apprenticeships.
- The governing body has a very good understanding of the work of the school. Governors share the headteacher's determination for all students to be successful. This ensures that leaders are held strongly to account for improving academic, social and emotional outcomes for students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Students' attendance is not as high as nationally expected in mainstream schools.
- The focus on meeting students' social and emotional needs does not always improve students' achievement.
- Students do not always have secure understanding about what they are learning before the topic changes or they are expected to complete harder work. This is particularly so in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and the work of teachers and teaching assistants in eight lessons, all of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- A separate work scrutiny was conducted to evaluate the impact of teachers' marking on students' progress and the presentation of students' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, two members of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a group of students.
- A telephone conversation was held with the school's self-evaluation partner.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) but the inspector took account of the school's own recent survey of parents and carers.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's review of its work, the school improvement plan, records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance, students' achievement and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held to review the effectiveness of the school's child protection procedures.
- The inspector also reviewed a sample of the minutes of meetings of the governing body and the reports provided for governors by senior leaders.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Compass is much smaller than the average-sized all-through school. The number of students on roll varies from 39 to 135 and depends on the number of referrals from schools within the Chesil Partnership and from Dorset County Council. At the time of the inspection, 44 students in Year 5 to Year 10 were on roll.
- The Compass provides alternative provision for students who have been excluded, were at risk of exclusion or who are in need of specific support to help them be successful in mainstream education. The school also caters for medical conditions that prevent attendance at mainstream school.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- The Compass is now a maintained school. Up until April 2014 it was a local authority provision for the Chesil Partnership of schools and Dorset County Council.
- Some students receive one-to-one support at the local fire station. Others follow short-term, work-related social development or resilience building courses at Rylands Farm, Greenwood Carpentry, Silvertree Survival, Weymouth Sailing Academy, Whitfield Farm or The Horse Charity.
- The majority of students who attend the school are dual-registered (still on the roll of a mainstream school).
- All students are offered full-time programmes. However, the time spent in school is tailored to meet individual students' needs. Education is sometimes delivered in the student's home by outreach workers.
- Students' length of stay at the school varies but for many is no longer than two terms. Key Stage 4 students who remain at the school to complete their compulsory education take GCSE examinations and other qualifications that support future employment. All students in the primary provision are reintegrated into mainstream school or move on to specialist settings by the end of Year 6.
- Almost all students are White British.
- Over half the students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority. This is well above average.
- The school does not receive the Year 7 catch-up fund or primary physical education (PE) and sport premium.
- All students on roll are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The progress, attainment and attendance of students are not evaluated by the Department for Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by ensuring that:
 - students' attendance is at least as high as nationally expected in mainstream schools
 - all teachers, and especially in mathematics, make sure that students have secure understanding before moving onto the next topic or more challenging work
 - students' social and emotional development, and the work undertaken to help them build strong and trusting relationships, enables them to develop the resilience necessary to reach the high expectations set for their academic achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has resulted in a culture change within the school. The focus is no longer on just improving students' behaviour. They are now expected to be prepared to learn and to make good academic progress. Morale is high and staff have high expectations for students' academic attainment. This is impacting strongly on improving their achievement.
- The staff, all of whom undertake their leadership responsibilities well, are overwhelmingly positive about the changes in the school. They recognise that the changes have required them to be increasingly focused on students' achievement. They have welcomed the increased accountability for ensuring that students are appropriately qualified for the next steps in their education, employment or training.
- The school's evaluation of its work is thorough and the areas for further development are accurately identified. This has enabled leaders to successfully manage the change from being a local authority provision to becoming a maintained school in which governors and leaders have responsibility for all aspects of the school's work, including the management of financial resources.
- Teaching is good and improving. Leaders conduct regular checks on the quality of teaching through lesson observations, work scrutiny and listening to the views of students. Teachers' performance is now very well managed and they benefit from a range of opportunities to share good practice which helps them to develop and enhance their skills.
- The work of the school to improve students' emotional literacy, social interactions and behaviour is strong. Students who, in mainstream settings, found it difficult to work with adults and their peers are supported to build strong relationships which are based on trust and mutual respect. This ensures that students quickly develop the confidence to re-engage with learning. Many are successfully reintegrated into mainstream schools.
- There has been a strong emphasis on developing students' basic skills. Literacy and numeracy are developed through all aspects of the school's work this ensures that students make rapid gains in their reading, writing and mathematical competencies.
- Senior leaders have developed an effective system for tracking students' progress. Very good use is made of subject expertise within the Chesil Partnership to check the quality of teachers' assessments. This means that the information about students' progress and achievement is reliable and accurate.
- Highly effective systems are in place for tracking students' behaviour, attendance and progress when they are in settings away from the school. Outreach workers take students to their placements and remain with them when they are there. Students are kept very safe as prompt action is taken to address any concerns.
- The school has a highly inclusive philosophy in which equality of opportunity is strongly promoted. All staff act as positive role models and have the skills to remain calm and highly professional when students become upset. Students understand the impact of their behaviour on others. There have been no recorded incidents of discrimination, racism or homophobic behaviour this academic year.
- Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and meet all current statutory requirements. Every possible care is taken to minimise risk and to protect students from harm. This includes signposting students to services and activities which will help to keep them safe at times when the school is not open, such as the summer break.
- The curriculum is constantly under review. It meets the needs, talents and aspirations of students exceptionally well. Students are able to study a broad range of vocational subjects and GCSEs including English and mathematics. Teachers have the confidence and professional knowledge to ensure that students in Year 10 and Year 11 are able to continue with the courses they started in mainstream settings.
- The school prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Lessons which help them develop skills to cope with everyday life situations, opportunities to represent the school at local events and contributions towards the leadership of the school support this preparation. For example, students were involved in the recent interviews for a deputy headteacher. The impressive range of enrichment activities enables students to develop the skills necessary to form healthy relationships and for future employment.
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. The school has been awarded UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award, and the principle of 'with respect comes responsibility' is very well promoted through all aspects of the school's work. Tolerance and respect for difference are evident in students' good behaviour and highly positive relationships between all members of the school community.
- Additional funding, such as the pupil premium and special educational needs top-up funding, is used very well to provide additional support. Outreach workers are highly skilled; they provide education in a student's home when attending school is difficult. One-to-one support in school helps students to make up

the ground lost through long-term absence or exclusion from mainstream settings. Disadvantaged students and those with specific learning difficulties make the same good progress as their peers.

- Parent surveys are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the school and the opportunities provided for students to re-engage with learning. Students are also very appreciative of the 'fresh start' offered by the school.
- The school works closely with careers advisors to provide students with very good advice about the various options available to them when leaving school. The display in the main corridor of the school promotes high ambitions as it illustrates the large number of former students who have moved on to further education, training or employment. Some former students have secured places at university.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school. It works with leaders to support provision for students who are in the care of the local authority and to secure additional help when students' circumstances make them vulnerable.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is very effective and governors make a strong contribution to the work of the school, including the move to become a maintained school.
 - Governors are highly skilled and professional. They have the expertise required to hold leaders strongly to account for the academic outcomes for students. They also have excellent understanding of the school's work to very effectively develop students' emotional literacy and social skills and the impact this has on preparing students for learning. Governors know that the pupil premium is used to good effect and that disadvantaged students make similar progress to others in the school.
 - Governors have very good understanding of the impact of teaching on students' achievement. They rigorously oversee the management of teachers' performance and ensure that pay increases are only awarded when teaching secures good outcomes for students.
 - Governors have developed their skills to oversee the management the school budget very well. Rigorous monitoring ensures that in-year funding is carefully tracked and used for the benefit of those students with additional needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils **are good**

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Most students enter the school with a record of poor behaviour; many have missed much of their education due to long-term absence or lengthy periods of exclusion. The very effective support and nurturing which is quickly implemented when students join the school ensures that positive attitudes towards learning are quickly established. However, some students do not yet have the resilience necessary to reach the high expectations set for their academic achievement.
- Students are very effectively supported to build positive relationships with their peers and staff. This helps them to develop a sense of self-worth, to re-gain their self-confidence and to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.
- In lessons, students demonstrate a commitment to their learning and are keen to achieve success. Their work in books is very well presented and most are keen to talk about the progress they are making.
- Students behave well outside of lessons. They are polite and courteous towards visitors.
- Students who spoke to the inspector were very positive about the difference the school has made to their views of school and teachers. They feel that school staff respect them; this is something they had not experienced in mainstream settings. During the inspection, no concerns were raised about students' behaviour by parents, staff or students.
- Students' attendance improves strongly when they join the school. Overall attendance levels have risen year-on-year and are currently 90%. Although this is low when compared to all schools nationally, it is above the national average for pupil referral units.
- Many students who had not attended school for many months now have high attendance. However, this is not yet consistent and attendance remains low for some students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Fixed-term exclusions are falling and are only used as a last resort or to emphasise to students the types of behaviour that are unacceptable or pose a risk to health or safety.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Recent improvements to the school site mean that visitors are not able to gain access to students unless rigorous identity checks have been carried out.

- Students feel very safe in school and this view is endorsed by almost all parents and staff. Students are not allowed to leave the school site during the day unless they have parental permission or have been signed out by parents or staff or a pre-arranged appointment with an outside agency has been made.
- Students are very thoroughly taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations including the use of social media. They know how to recognise potential grooming and report any incidents of 'sexting' to school staff. Key personnel have access to a proxy account which enables them to quickly address any potential cyber bullying.
- Bullying is rare because students are very effectively taught about the hurt it can cause. None of the students spoken to have experienced bullying since joining the school. Records show that there have been just four incidents of bullying this academic year, none of which were related to discrimination, racism or homophobia.
- Students at potential risk of harm receive expert care from staff. Support from external agencies is swiftly commissioned when students need it and the school regularly holds case-conferences to ensure that all agencies work together to safeguard and protect highly vulnerable students.
- Leaders have received specialist training to enable them to identify the signs of child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, extremism and radicalisation.
- All staff receive regular and detailed child protection training. They have expert understanding of how to identify changes in students' patterns of attendance or behaviour, or in their well-being. The school's system for recording concerns is exceptionally well developed and ensures that all information is chronologically collated. Consequently, any student at potential risk of harm is quickly identified and safeguarded.
- Students attending part of their education off site are kept very safe because school staff attend the placements with the students. Risk assessments for all trips, visits and off-site provision are detailed and meticulously implemented.
- Leaders, including governors, have undertaken 'safer recruitment' training and this prevents the employment of any person who would not be suitable to work with children.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching in all subjects is at least good and has strong impact on enabling students to make good progress from their starting points. This was evident during lesson observations, work in students' books and information about students' achievement.
- Teachers are proud of the school and its work to enable students to reintegrate into society. Classrooms are well organised, tidy and attractive places in which to learn. Displays promote high expectations and the success achieved by students on a lesson-by-lesson basis helps to keep students motivated and interested in their learning.
- All staff work hard to get to know their students very well. They use the information from initial meetings and assessments to skilfully identify students' barriers to learning. This facilitates the swift building of very strong relationships. The positive ethos in the school, and in classrooms, helps students to rebuild their self-confidence and to understand the importance of learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly professional. They calmly, but persistently, communicate classroom rules and this means that boundaries are understood by students and they are able to fully participate in lessons.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and frequently and use the outcomes of their marking to plan the next steps in students' learning. Lessons are therefore usually well matched to students' needs and learning often securely builds on what students already know and understand. However, this is not yet consistent across all subjects and students sometimes move on to new topics or more challenging work before they are ready to do so. This is especially so in mathematics.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics in all subjects is well developed and students make very good progress in these basic skills. The school makes excellent use of enrichment activities, trips and visits to help students to apply these skills in real-life contexts.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to effectively question students and to help them extend their knowledge or to address the reasons for poor understanding.
- Teachers' feedback is generally of high quality. Work in students' books shows that they make good gains in their academic understanding and, in practical subjects, in their skill development. However, not all students routinely respond to their teachers' feedback and this is most notable when attendance is low.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school at varying times throughout the year. Most have not attended school for lengthy periods of time due to persistent absence or because they have been excluded from school. This means that all have significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding and, consequently, their attainment is well below that typically expected for their age. Once at the school, students quickly re-engage with learning and highly personalised support enables them to make good progress.
- Students' barriers to learning and levels of understanding are quickly and accurately assessed when they join the school. Personalised learning programmes are precisely matched to students' needs. At Key Stage 4, this includes continuing with courses started in mainstream settings.
- Students in the primary provision make good progress and all are reintegrated into mainstream school or move on to specialist settings by the end of Year 6.
- From low starting points, students make good progress in the subjects they study. Students who are in the school for short periods before being reintegrated into mainstream schools quickly make up lost ground and are well placed to work at similar levels as others of the same age.
- Students who remain in the school until the end of Year 11 make good progress and achieve well in a range of GCSEs including English and mathematics. They also achieve very well in vocational qualifications which support future employment.
- In 2014, almost all students gained at least one GCSE pass and all achieved level 2 passes in vocational subjects. Students in the current Year 11 and Year 10 have achieved similarly well in their vocational subjects. The forecasts made by school leaders indicate that the majority of students currently on roll will achieve at least six GCSE passes. This indicates improvement in students' achievement since the appointment of the headteacher.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Academic targets set for individuals are the same as would be expected in mainstream settings. The school expects students to make one GCSE grade progress for each year they are at the school.
- Information provided by the school shows the same rates of progress for disadvantaged students as others in the school. It also shows that disabled students and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers. This is because all students receive very effective and personalised support.
- The most able students make good progress because leaders set high expectations for their achievement and because the support they receive challenges them to think deeply about their learning.
- Students make rapid gains in their personal development, including their emotional literacy, social awareness and ability to make and sustain healthy relationships. This helps them to make good gains in their learning because staff are very skilled at helping them to find solutions to their problems. However, some students do not yet have the resilience necessary to enable them to meet the high expectations set by the school for their academic achievement.
- Excellent opportunities are provided for students to develop new and work-related skills in a broad range of activities. These include cooking, powerboat driving and Royal Yacht Association (RYA) qualifications, woodworking, survival skills and bushcraft, animal care and motorcycling. Some students also follow programmes in fire safety which lead to them becoming fire cadets. Students thoroughly enjoy these opportunities and respond very well to the tough challenges set for them. They also develop a very good understanding of personal safety and health and safety in the workplace.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134373
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	449458

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Peer
Headteacher	Alison Glazier
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 November 2011
Telephone number	01305 206530
Fax number	01305 206531
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