

# Inspection of Compass Community School Hemsworth

58 Highfield Road, Hemsworth, Pontefract WF9 4EA

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 July 2021

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**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Requires improvement**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils have high aspirations. This is because leaders and staff regularly encourage pupils to do their very best. More recently, the quality of education pupils receive is helping them to learn more and move closer to realising their potential. When pupils start the school at different times of the year, they are swiftly welcomed into the school family. Staff know the pupils very well. This enables them to quickly identify any signs that suggest a pupil needs additional guidance or reassurance. This helps to keep pupils on track and focused on their work for large parts of the day.

Pupils trust staff. They believe every adult wants the very best for them. Relationships between pupils and staff are usually positive. There are occasions when pupils 'fly off the handle', but instances such as this are reducing. Staff are unanimous in their view that behaviour in the school is improving.

Pupils say they feel safe most of the time. The pupils spoken to told inspectors some bullying does happen. However, pupils are confident enough to report it, and they say staff take bullying and poor behaviour very seriously.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop personally and culturally during therapy sessions and trips to attractions such as the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The new headteacher is ably supported by a conscientious and effective executive team. Together, they are improving the school. A new, more academic and carefully sequenced curriculum is contributing to pupils learning content and skills that challenge them more than before. There is a strong daily focus on English and mathematics. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects that includes cookery, a particular highlight for pupils.

Staff attend a wide range of training events. This helps to strengthen their educational knowledge and skills, which they can use in the classroom. This, and the high standard of teaching resources available to staff, helps to ensure that those who are non-specialists have the guidance, resources and support to help pupils learn effectively. In the classroom, teachers and support staff have a detailed understanding of each pupils' strengths and areas for development. This is because they plan lessons together and review pupils' achievements at the end of each day. In this way, staff skilfully adapt the next day's lessons to meet pupils' varied learning needs.

Leaders are uncompromising in their quest to improve pupils' attendance. Their efforts are having mixed results. There are signs of improvement for some pupils. However, pupils' irregular or non-attendance is having a detrimental effect on their learning. This can be seen clearly in pupils' work. When they attend school, pupils can become engrossed in their work, creating unique song lyrics or writing powerful

letters to the prime minister linked to themes such as homelessness and knife-crime. For some pupils, their absence and the corresponding blank pages in their workbooks represent missed opportunities to connect and deepen their understanding.

Pupils describe a mixed picture of behaviour at school. Those spoken to during the inspection told inspectors that staff and pupils are frequently on the receiving end of bad language or insults. The school's own evidence highlights that the frequency of incidents of this nature is reducing substantially over the period of time each pupil has been at the school. This is, in part, due to staff managing pupils' behaviour in a personalised but consistent manner. During the inspection, in mathematics and art lessons, pupils were focused and eager to share an answer and contribute positively to class discussions. From sometimes deep-rooted, inappropriate behaviours when pupils start the school, staff quickly establish clear boundaries and develop a mutual respect which is contributing to improved standards of pupils' behaviour over time.

Leaders have started to prioritise reading in the school. Some pupils require a lot of help to catch-up and become fluent readers. Leaders use an appropriate phonics scheme, but the books pupils read are not always well-matched to their phonics knowledge. Pupils can request books from leaders should a particular book catch their eye. However, the school does not benefit from a wide and varied range of appropriate reading materials in order to help promote a love of reading.

The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator is knowledgeable, appropriately trained and has a strong understanding of pupils' needs. Leaders acknowledge that pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC) vary in quality and effectiveness. Analysis of pupils' current EHC plans shows that the link between pupils' aspirations and outcomes is not immediately evident. Timescales for the introduction of support and/or expected completion dates can be vague. As a result, provision is not always well matched to the needs of pupils.

The personal development curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to gain an age-appropriate awareness of their own mental and physical health in addition to three main areas of learning: health and well-being, relationships and living in the wider world. Staff are creative and actively seek opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning by introducing a range of enrichment activities that includes trips to the theatre. Pupils receive independent careers advice. They value this and say it has helped to clarify what they wish to do when they leave school.

Staff morale is high. They say leaders are mindful of the pressures staff are under. Across the academic year, leaders regularly 'check-in' on staff and look for inventive ways to help reduce their workload.

The proprietor and governors provide strong support and challenge to school leaders. They ensure the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and that the independent school standards are met consistently. Governors conduct an annual skills audit. This helps them to identify areas of strength and aspects of school leadership and management in which postholders require further training.

The proprietor and governors ensure that the school meets all of its statutory responsibilities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils really well. They are aware that pupils at the school are extremely vulnerable. Staff clearly understand the signs that may suggest a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or harm. There are suitable systems in place for pupils to raise a concern or share any worries.

Some pupils say there are times when they do not feel safe. This is linked to the behaviour and attitudes of their peers, which is improving. Nevertheless, all pupils agree bullying is taken seriously and staff are supportive when concerns are raised.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Although improving sustainably and securely towards good, pupils' behaviour and attendance require improvement. There are still too many instances in lessons and at social times where pupils do not show respect for their peers or staff. This makes some pupils feel unsafe. Similarly, while there are examples of a turnaround for some pupils, rates of attendance are not consistently strong. Leaders and governors should ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning, their peers and staff are consistently positive. Additionally, leaders and governors should improve rates of attendance further so that more pupils benefit from the improving quality of education on offer.
- Leaders have started to improve the teaching of reading. It is early days in this regard. Currently, pupils who need to catch-up are not supported as well as they could be. Leaders and governors should ensure the books pupils read help them practise the sounds they have learned. Furthermore, leaders and governors should ensure all pupils have access to a wide range of literature that helps them to develop a love of reading.
- EHC plans can lack detail and precision. Consequently, pupils are not always receiving the strong support across education, health and social care to which they are entitled. Leaders should work closely with wider professionals to ensure that EHC plans identify how the curriculum is or may be adapted to meet pupils' needs. Additionally, EHC plans should be revised carefully to clearly highlight the link between pupils' aspirations and outcomes so that provision is well matched to pupils' additional learning needs.

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147306
<b>DfE registration number</b>	384/6009
<b>Local authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10192266
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	5
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Bernie Gibson
<b>Chair</b>	Kate East
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Hughes
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£32,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	07753 584 581
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.compass-schools.org/compass-community-school-hemsworth/">www.compass-schools.org/compass-community-school-hemsworth/</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:christopher.hughes@compass-schools.org">christopher.hughes@compass-schools.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Compass group of schools and aims to meet the needs of a small number of pupils aged 11 to 17 years, most of whom have social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is located in the town of Hemsworth, West Yorkshire.
- The school admits pupils referred by a number of local authorities.
- A new headteacher took up post in March 2021.
- The school has its own specialist teaching and support rooms that are separate to an adjoining children's home.
- All pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- Pupils join the school at different times of the year. Currently, pupils on roll are in key stages 3 and 4.
- The school is registered to admit eight pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were five pupils on roll.

## Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, governors, leaders belonging to the regional executive team, the special educational needs coordinator, pupils and staff. An inspector spoke on the telephone with the virtual school headteacher.
- The headteacher was self-isolating as a precaution due to COVID-19 (coronavirus). Inspectors met with her remotely throughout the inspection.
- An inspector met with a member of staff who was training to become a teacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's planning documents and policies, behaviour and attendance records, safeguarding files, and checks on staff recruitment.
- Inspectors toured the premises and looked at a range of documentation to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors met remotely with curriculum leaders and visited a sample of lessons in mathematics and art. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' books and other kinds of work produced by pupils who were part of the classes we visited. In addition, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in English, science, child development and

personal, social, health and economic education. Inspectors had discussions with teachers and staff from the lessons observed.

### **Inspection team**

Lee Elliott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Steve Shaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

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