

Inspection of Compass Community School Essex

274 Harwich Road, Little Clacton, Clacton on Sea, EssexCO16 9PY

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021 and 22 to 24
February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

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 speak positively about their school. They have forged productive working relationships with staff. The close-knit family ethos is helping pupils to trust in education again. Pupils feel like they belong, and they want to achieve well.

Staff care greatly about each pupil and support them well. Sometimes, pupils can have a difficult day with their behaviour, but they know how to get back on track and do so readily. Pupils talk candidly about their helpful experiences of support and therapy. They know what they need to do to improve their mental health and behaviour.

Pupils benefit from effective wrap-around care. Pupils have access to a wide range of professional services. Bespoke programmes for supporting pupils are helping to remove barriers to education. Pupils secure their next steps in education, training or employment.

Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They trust adults to deal with any concerns. This includes bullying when it happens.

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

Since its opening, there have been several changes in headteacher and key staff at the school. In the last year, the proprietor quickly took action to stabilise staffing, appointing an experienced regional executive headteacher as interim headteacher to secure improvement. Systems are now more rigorous. The recording and reporting of key information, such as attendance, behaviour and bullying, is as it should be.

There is an ambitious curriculum in place which is flexible according to the needs of pupils. Pupils can sit GCSEs, vocational qualifications and undertake training for work placements. Leaders have ensured that subject specialists teach pupils.

Each pupil has a bespoke curriculum designed to meet their individual needs. The starting point for each curriculum is the pupil's education, health and care plan (EHC plan) and includes their interests and future ambitions. For example, a few pupils attend alternative provision part time. They are enjoying success in trades such as bricklaying, painting and decorating. Staff work closely with therapists and other professionals to provide support and to inform adjustments to planning.

Reading is at the heart of each pupil's curriculum. Pupils value and appreciate the importance of reading. They know it is the gateway to better education, but they also value it for enjoyment and relaxation. They enjoy opportunities during the day to read and to talk about the books they are reading. For those pupils who find reading more challenging, there are support programmes in places. This is helping pupils to gain more confidence to become better readers.

The curriculum in many subjects is coherently planned. In the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of key content over time. This includes developing an understanding of healthy relationships and sex education. There are regular opportunities to revisit key learning or to go into more depth on a topic that is helpful for the pupil and their needs. In this area of the curriculum, teachers precisely check what pupils know and understand. This is not the case across all subjects. In a few subjects, teachers have not thought carefully enough about the key information pupils need to know and revisit so they get better at the subject.

The personal development programme is well considered. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and independent living. Pupils learn about difference, diversity and respect. They learn money management, such as how to set a budget and how to monitor spending. Every week, pupils engage in community visits to put into practice what they have learned, such as shopping for groceries and then cooking for others. Pupils receive helpful careers guidance. They each have a careers action plan which helps them to progress towards their future ambitions.

Staff recently received beneficial training in techniques to de-escalate tense situations with behaviour. Most staff are using such techniques consistently and well. In a few cases, staff shy away from telling pupils when they are wrong and why. Leaders know this and provide additional support if necessary.

Staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey are proud to be members of the school. Staff say that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being.

The proprietor and the governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide appropriate support and challenge for leaders. They seek external views to help inform their conclusions of the effectiveness of the quality of the school's work. This includes systematically checking that all the independent school standards are met. Governors make sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. All policies are readily available on request to parents and carers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand exceptionally well their role in helping the most vulnerable pupils stay safe. They are sensitive to pupils' past experiences and are vigilant. They notice very quickly any small signs of changes in behaviour and report this promptly. Leaders' daily briefings with staff and all relevant professionals ensure that swift action can take place where need be.

Record-keeping and safeguarding processes and procedures, including safer recruitment, are robust. The proprietor and leaders ensure that the right people are employed to work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, staff are not precisely identifying the gaps in pupils' knowledge and choosing judiciously what pupils need to learn to get better at the subject. There can be a tendency to keep delivering material to get through the content of the prescribed curriculum for the examination rather than securing knowledge and understanding. This can lead to confusion for pupils, and it also makes it more difficult for them to build upon what they know and can do. Leaders need to train staff further so that teachers consistently check pupils' knowledge and understanding, amending their planning of the curriculum accordingly.
- Since opening, staffing has not been stable. There have been several leadership changes. This means that some of the improvements to systems are new. The proprietor needs to ensure stability in leadership and staffing so that the good quality of provision is sustained.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

Unique reference number	147473
DfE registration number	881/6075
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10203408
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Bernadine Gibson
Headteacher	Joanna Cliffe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,300 to £87,000
Telephone number	01255 520024
Website	None
Email address	bernie.gibson@compasscommunity.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was first registered on 31 January 2020. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- Due to mitigating circumstances, this inspection was conducted in two parts. Inspectors visited on site on 16 and 17 November 2021. The inspection was paused. The inspectors completed the inspection from 22 to 24 February 2022. The inspectors only inspected the education provision at this school.
- The school caters for up to 12 pupils aged 11 to 17 years of age. Pupils are referred by the local authority, typically because they have been excluded from mainstream schools, special schools or pupil referral units. Most pupils have experienced significant disruption to their schooling.
- Almost all pupils have an EHC plan relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school uses one provider of alternative provision which is unregistered.
- The current regional executive headteacher has been managing the school since November 2021. The proprietor has recently appointed a new headteacher who started in January 2022 and is working alongside the executive headteacher during a period of handover.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, leaders from Compass Community Ltd and representatives from the governing body. They also met the regional executive headteacher from the East Midlands region, the newly appointed headteacher, senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. Inspectors looked at work from a range of other subjects, including mathematics and art.

- One inspector made a telephone call to the manager at the alternative provision.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils informally about different aspects of school life.
- Inspectors toured the premises to review the suitability of accommodation.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding records and spoke with staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff and those for Ofsted’s survey for pupils. There were too few responses to Ofsted Parent View for results to be available. Any parental comments were evaluated.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kim Pigram

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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