

Inspection of Compass Community School Vicarage Park

The Old Vicarage, The Bullring, Stottesdon, Kidderminster DY14 8UH

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' unwavering high expectations and drive to improve the life chances of every pupil are the foundation of what all staff do. Positive relationships and meaningful interaction are a joy to observe here. Pupils are happy and safe, and most pupils thrive after just a short time at the school.

All pupils have had traumatic previous experiences in education. They have been removed from schools and had prolonged periods out of education. All pupils now regularly engage in learning.

Leaders focus intensively on pupils' personal development. They have carefully thought about what activities pupils can do. The school's 'equals' curriculum ensures that pupils have many opportunities to bring their learning to life. For example, horse riding, outside learning and structured lunch and breaktimes help pupils to increase their independence.

Leaders know their pupils exceptionally well. They have ensured that all staff know every pupil and their specific needs, including how to communicate with them. As a result, everyone is immediately aware of any changes in pupils' behaviour. Staff act quickly and calmly to de-escalate any situations. Pupils' behaviour has markedly improved. For the most part of the day, the school is a calm and orderly environment.

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

Vicarage Park provides all pupils with a personalised curriculum that is tailored to meet their specific needs. Leaders have structured learning to be stimulating and engaging. There is a clear therapeutic focus. Pupils are supported well to access their learning. They develop a love of learning through meaningful activities designed to increase pupils' confidence and independence. This enables pupils to thrive.

Staff ensure that pupils use the outside space well. They find out what pupils can do so that they can build on their strengths. The practical skills approach ensures that pupils immerse themselves into learning. Pupils learn academic and functional skills. They develop transferable and independent living skills, and this helps them to overcome barriers to learning.

Most staff break down pupils' academic learning into precise, appropriate steps. The school's assessment system enables staff to then plan what pupils need to learn next. While this generally works well, not all staff know how to break learning into appropriate chunks for pupils. This means that some learning tasks are not well enough thought through. As a result, some pupils wait in lessons for their learning to move on, or do tasks that are too easy for them.

Staff promote a love of reading well. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. Texts are matched well to pupils' ability and needs. For example, reading skills are promoted through multi-sensory opportunities such as music and dance. Recently, leaders introduced a scheme to improve the teaching of phonics. Not all staff have received full training on the programme. As a result, there is variability in how the phonics programme is delivered. This means some pupils do not make as much progress as they could in learning letter sounds.

Pupils' personal, social and health development is at the heart of all the school does. Learning is structured so that pupils can make sense of the world around them and find their place within it. Work to make sure that pupils take part in everyday life underpins their learning. For example, pupils learn how to share resources, such as taking turns on the trampoline. Structured activities at social times also support this work. This helps pupils to grow in confidence and gives them a sense of belonging.

Staff's work to support pupils with their behaviour is excellent. They are highly skilled at spotting when pupils' behavioural needs change and why. Staff take swift action to provide pupils with effective support to overcome their difficulties. They give pupils time and space in a safe environment to respond positively. This prevents potentially challenging situations from escalating and enables pupils to return to learning quickly. Physical interventions are needed rarely because of staff's vigilance and support.

The proprietor, director of education, executive headteacher and head of school are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They have detailed knowledge of how well the school is performing. They constantly look for ways to improve. Proprietors and leaders ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. They have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They also ensured that the school followed the government's relationships, sex and health education guidance effectively when implementing the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff follow the safeguarding procedures in place. Every pupil has a detailed risk assessment that ensures all staff understand pupils' vulnerabilities. Leaders make sure that all staff receive specialist training so that they understand specific pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. This means that staff can quickly spot and report any concerns about a pupil.

Leaders respond immediately to any safeguarding concerns. They work very effectively with a wide range of different services to keep pupils as safe as possible.

The school's safeguarding policy adheres to current government guidance and is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all staff have received specific training on the school's phonics programme. Therefore, some staff lack expertise and knowledge about how to deliver it effectively. As a result, activities are not always structured to best support all learners. This results in some pupils not doing as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are able to deliver the phonics programme effectively.
- Some staff do not understand fully effective teaching approaches. This means that some learning tasks for pupils are not thought through well enough. As a result, some pupils often wait in lessons for their learning to move on or complete tasks that are too easy for them. Leaders need to make sure that all staff understand how to best support pupils' learning so that pupils receive work that allows them to build up their knowledge over time.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148587
DfE registration number	885/6079
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10220456
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Compass Community Limited
Chair	Kate East
Headteacher	David Lowe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£99,000 to £127,000
Telephone number	01746330576
Website	www.compass-schools.org/our-schools/vicarage-park
Email address	dave.lowe@compass-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Compass Community School Vicarage Park is an independent special school for pupils who have severe and complex learning needs, including autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of Compass Community Ltd. This is a company that runs other special schools for pupils with mild, moderate and severe/complex learning needs.
- The school did not use any alternative provision.
- This is the school's first standard inspection since opening in March 2021.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the director of education, the executive headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator) and the head of school (who is also the curriculum leader). Inspectors also met with class teachers. The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading and communication, personal, social, health and economic education, physical development and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning and discussed this planning with the curriculum leader. They conducted joint lesson visits with leaders and looked at a range of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed work across the wider curriculum, including the outdoor learning.
- Inspectors observed pupils at break and lunchtime and visited the off-site horse-riding session.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.

- Inspectors took account of the responses on Ofsted Parent View, including parental free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kirsty Foulkes

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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