

Inspection of Compass Community School Aylward Park

Crown Street, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4AX

Inspection dates:

4 to 6 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils here feel 'safe, supported and listened to'. They are of the view that they would not be where they are now without the help of the staff at school. Pupils successfully achieve their goals, whether that is a college placement or to fulfil their targets on their individual plans. There is a strong nurturing ethos where staff value each pupil.

Staff consider carefully pupils' social and emotional wellness, as well as their academic starting points. They accurately identify pupils' barriers to education. Staff work well with pupils to remove these difficulties. For example, helping them to feel comfortable when meeting new people for the first time. Pupils benefit from bespoke provision, which includes a therapy programme linked to their social and emotional needs. Pupils have a range of opportunities to widen their experiences, from undertaking theatre trips to London to visiting the local church.

Pupils report there is no bullying. School records show that this is the case. Staff are well trained to manage complex behaviour and do so effectively.

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

Leaders ensure that pupils access a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum. This works in tandem with a well-considered therapy programme geared towards pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils have access to a range of qualifications, being able to undertake GCSE examinations as well as vocational qualifications in courses such as hair and beauty.

The curriculum is well planned. Pupils follow academic courses as well as learning life skills, such as being able to cook a meal, to help them develop independence. Teachers find out first what pupils know and can do, and they ensure that they make a good start to their learning. Some pupils are at the school on a short placement. Teachers plot carefully how they can maximise the time they have so pupils can leave with the knowledge and skills they need for their next placement.

Teachers deliver the curriculum through a combination of specialist and non-specialist teaching. This is so pupils can access expert knowledge while also having social and emotional stability with a key worker. When this works well, pupils engage in the subject and want to learn. They gain qualifications in specialist subjects. Where it doesn't work so well is when the non-specialist makes decisions to adapt the curriculum or cut out content altogether to help pupil engagement. Leaders are not keeping a close enough eye on when this happens. As a result, leaders do not have a clear view of the impact of these decisions on the delivery of the curriculum over time.

Leaders encourage pupils to form lifelong reading habits. There are daily opportunities for independent and shared reading. Typically, pupils want to read

short non-fiction articles. However, the school lacks a suitable range of fiction which is age and contextually appropriate for the pupils.

All pupils at this provision have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have strong communication with the professionals who make up the team around each child. This helps leaders regularly update pupils' individual targets on their behaviour plans and/or education, health and care plans. Staff celebrate with pupils each small step to achievement, so they experience success. Praise is used deliberately and meaningfully. Staff are consistent with the systems they use to manage pupils' behaviour. The set routines give pupils a sense of security.

Leaders pay sharp attention to detail with the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum that pupils follow. While pupils follow topics which make up the core curriculum, they will also have additional sessions based on key content they need to know. Leaders think very carefully about pupils' experience of trauma so that they can plan the delivery of challenging content in a sensitive way. Pupils speak appreciatively of this as well as the impartial careers guidance that leaders provide.

The proprietor and governing body monitor the school closely. They have ensured that leadership changes have had minimal impact on the day-to-day running of the school. Leaders from the company visit regularly, observe the school at work and discuss their perceptions with governors and school leaders. This helps to inform support as well as challenge. Governors have made sure that the school meets the independent school standards and complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. They have checked that the school implements the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education. Equally, the site is suited to the pupils' needs and well maintained.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety is at the heart of all leaders' decision-making and actions. Leaders undertake timely risk assessments in collaboration with professionals from external agencies to keep pupils safe. They strictly follow expert medical guidance.

Staff are up to date with their safeguarding training and know how to report if they have any concerns. Daily staff briefings let staff know of anything that has happened to pupils that may influence behaviours or raise any potential safeguarding concerns. Staff are highly vigilant, knowing well the pupils' backgrounds and the risks they face.

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

- Pupils typically read a diet of short non-fiction articles and have not developed reading habits which include a range of fiction. The choice of available fiction in the classrooms and in the relaxing areas is not helping with this. As a result, pupils' enjoyment of reading is limited. Leaders should ensure that pupils have access to high-quality fiction which is age and contextually appropriate.
- On occasion, non-specialist staff will make choices to amend the curriculum content. While this may be to help with pupils' engagement, it does not necessarily cover the planned content. There is a lack of oversight when this occurs. Leaders should sharpen their monitoring of staff's delivery of the curriculum so they can see the cumulative impact such decisions make.

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	148808
DfE registration number	935/6030
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10243322
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Proprietor	Compass Community Ltd
Headteacher	Joanna Cliffe
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,300 to £87,000
Telephone number	01728 448751
Website	www.compass-schools.org
Email address	rebecca.slayford@compasscommunity.co.uk

Information about this school

- The school was first registered on 16 November 2021. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school caters for up to 12 pupils aged 11 to 17 years of age. Pupils are referred by local authorities. Typically, pupils have an education, health and care plan relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have experienced trauma and significant disruption to their schooling.
- The school does not use supply or alternative provision.
- The regional executive headteacher has been managing the school in the interim between headteacher appointments. The previous headteacher left in March 2022 and the new headteacher starts in October 2022.

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.

- Inspectors met with the director of education, who was acting on behalf of the proprietor of Compass Community Ltd, leaders from the company and representatives from the governing body. They also met with the regional executive headteacher and staff.
- Inspectors met with a therapist from the pupils' therapy programmes. The lead inspector spoke via telephone to the virtual headteacher from the London Borough of Bexley local authority. She also spoke to pupils' assigned social workers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, PSHE and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with subject leaders and teachers, looked at curriculum plans and examples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to pupils who had previously attended the school.
- Inspectors gathered evidence of pupils' views through a variety of means, including through telephone calls, letters and memory books.
- 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 toured the premises to review the suitability of the school buildings.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Fordham

His Majesty's Inspector

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