

Inspection of Compass Community School Willow Park

Willow Street, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax HX6 2BU

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

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 highly of the school. They say that it is a happy place, and that staff are brilliant. Several commented that this school was 'the best' they had ever attended. One commented that the school was 'utopia, the place where I can be myself'. Several pupils spoken to said school felt like being part of a family and that this made them feel safe and secure.

Leaders and staff know pupils well. This helps them to understand the situations that may trigger a pupil to become agitated or upset. This knowledge also enables staff to set work which stretches and challenges every pupil in line with the aims of the curriculum. One pupil commented, 'I didn't believe in myself until I started this school, and now I want to go to college to learn even more'.

School records show that bullying is rare. Pupils agree that staff are very quick to sort it out if they raise a concern. The school's therapists are on hand to support pupils should they have a problem. This enables learning to continue and the atmosphere in school to remain calm.

School leaders are passionate about making sure pupils have as many opportunities as possible to experience the world outside school. In the last year, pupils from the school have visited Old Trafford to watch an England under 21's football match. Pupils have also taken part in world mental health 'make me smile' week as well as attending workshops on mindfulness, mediation and yoga. Being able to undertake and experience such a wide curriculum has increased pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

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

Individual subject coordinators based across the company ensure that the curriculum is ambitious, effectively sequenced and offers a strong foundation for all pupils. Within the school, teaching staff ensure that planned learning is tailored closely to the needs of each pupil. This ensures that any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are addressed quickly and effectively.

Pupils build up their knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Those spoken with during the inspection were able to recall previous learning accurately. For example, two older pupils were very clear about the meaning of utopia and dystopia in relation to human civilisation. This was from work they had covered in English. Others could clearly relate the importance of their knowledge of the four rules of number when solving algebraic equations.

Teachers regularly use assessment to plan pupils' future learning. End of unit tests are used to enable staff to assess the strength of pupils' knowledge and understanding and to assess whether they need to revisit work for further reinforcement. Staff are adept at asking pupils questions to check on learning during lessons, changing their approach if needed.

Pupils with lower levels of reading are offered extra support. Leaders have introduced a successful programme of support for older pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Whole-school reading sessions are scheduled daily. Pupils say that they have freedom to read what interests them. This has increased their pleasure in reading.

The vast majority of the subject areas in the school curriculum are well planned and staff are clear about what they are to teach. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is the one exception. Pupils are often confident in their use of ICT, but school leaders recognise that the subject does not offer an accreditation and some pupils struggle more than others. The recent introduction of a more formal approach to ICT has not been fully embedded. Leaders recognise that this area needs further development.

Pupils' behaviour inside and outside the classroom is good. During the inspection, corridors were calm, and purposeful learning could be seen in classrooms. The school's therapy team offers weekly support to nearly all pupils. These sessions also support staff to help pupils to manage their behaviour and recognise the triggers which may cause a pupil to become distressed.

Pupils recognise the importance of kindness and compassion for others as well as the importance of British values and becoming responsible citizens. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum enables pupils to develop an understanding of the groups protected by the Equality Act 2010, as well as to see the world through the eyes of those who follow other religions. Pupils receive appropriate and sensitively delivered relationship and sex education in line with their age and development.

Secondary pupils receive careers advice and guidance from an external provider. Staff have also introduced a 'jobs board' and pupils volunteer to undertake additional responsibilities in the school kitchen and in the running of the breakfast club. This, coupled with a range of work experience opportunities in, for example, charity shops, enables pupils to gain a wider insight into possible future careers.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed to continuing to improve the school. They hold leaders to account successfully, while also supporting the ethos and values of the school. School leaders and staff have formed a strong bond with parents. Leaders work hard to engage parents. School staff commented that leaders always listen to what they have to say and take into account their needs, including their work-life balance.

By the end of the inspection, all of the independent school standards were met. Several small adjustments were needed to meet some of the standards. For example, the second desk in the medical room was removed to make a more adequate space for the required bed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is displayed on the school website. The school has recently trained a new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) to act as a deputy to the head of school. This will ensure that there is a DSL on the school site at all times. The school currently uses an electronic system for recording safeguarding information.

Analysis of safeguarding records showed that online files are kept in chronological order and that school leaders work closely with other agencies to support individual pupils when necessary.

Staff spoken to were clear about the action they need to take should a pupil raise a concern. All staff receive regular training from the DSL. They also confirmed that they receive regular updates from senior leaders on local concerns which may affect pupils who attend the school.

Leaders who are involved in school recruitment have undertaken safer recruitment training and are clear about which checks to undertake before new staff join the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

The ICT curriculum is not planned out effectively and staff are not confident at delivering the curriculum. Some pupils' levels of skills and understanding of ICT are lower than they should be. Leaders need to develop a sequential scheme of work and ensure that staff receive the training to deliver it.

How can I feed back my views?

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

School details

Unique reference number	148059
DfE registration number	381/6025
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10202218
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	6 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Compass Community Limited
Chair	Bernadine Gibson
Headteacher	Christopher Hughes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,000
Telephone number	01422 557273
Website	www.compass-schools.org/willow-park/
Email address	rebecca.slayford@compass-schools.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspection

Information about this school

- The school is situated in the town of Sowerby Bridge.
- The school was registered in January 2021
- The head of school has been in post for just over a year.
- The school has been set up to meet the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and other associated special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Most of the pupils who attend the school are from Bradford and Calderdale local authorities.
- The school does not use alternative education provision.

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.

- The inspection team met with the proprietor, the head of school, the executive headteacher, members of staff and the director of educational services. Internet calls were also carried out with the curriculum leads for science, ICT, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and English.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, ICT and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers, spoke to a group of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders in other subject areas. Inspectors also toured the building to gather evidence for part 5 of the independent school standards. The inspection team met with the head of school to discuss the curriculum and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Penny	Ofsted Inspector

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