

Inspection of a good school: Compass School

Green Lane, Millbrook, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 9FQ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending the Compass are helped to re-engage with learning and develop their self-esteem. They value the care and patience they receive. Staff are sensitive to the pupils' needs and invest time in building strong relationships. Consequently, pupils say that they feel known and accepted and can 'be themselves' here. Pupils value the unconditional companionship provided by Bertie, the school dog. This contributes to the positive nurturing ethos in school.

Every morning begins with an opportunity for pupils to settle into the day in their tutor group. For most classes, the first session of the day centres around an aspect of learning from the SPICE curriculum (Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional). Older pupils appreciate this time to debate current affairs and issues of interest. However, pupils do not learn as well as they could across other subjects because the curriculum is not yet securely in place.

While most pupils behave well in lessons, some do exhibit more challenging behaviour. Sometimes this distracts other pupils or can lead to some feeling concerned. Staff manage incidents of poor behaviour carefully and help pupils learn from their actions. Sometimes bullying can occur. When this happens, pupils trust staff to address this and bring about a fair resolution.

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

Leaders use initial assessments of pupils' needs to put the right social and emotional provision in place for them quickly. They check how well they are progressing and adapt provision accordingly. Leaders understand the importance of motivating pupils to learn. This has led to recent redevelopment of the curriculum and aims to promote higher levels

of engagement. Importance has been placed on minimising moving between classes as far as possible to create a safe and predictable environment for learning. This has led to leaders adopting a primary school model for learning for a wider range of pupils. This includes keeping lessons in a consistent classroom base.

While pupils attend the Compass, leaders aim to maintain pupils' progress within their previous school's academic pathway. They aspire to provide pupils with a purposeful curriculum. In some subject areas, this is well embedded. However, in others, leaders know they have further improvements to make. Learning is not always thoughtfully enough sequenced in all subjects. This means teachers cannot always identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

While leaders understand the importance of reading, they are still implementing the school's reading framework. Leaders have undertaken some initial assessments to gauge pupils' literacy levels. However, there is not yet a consistent approach in place to swiftly identify and target precise help for pupils who have urgent literacy needs. The imminent work to train staff to deliver a phonics programme for primary pupils is important to make sure all pupils learn to read fluently.

There is not yet a school-wide approach in place to support pupils to become even more independent in regulating their own behaviour. Following an incident, staff and pupils are given time to reflect and learn. However, because records of incidents are not clearly organised, leaders are not able to notice patterns quickly. This means that they are unable to sharply identify where reduction or escalation of behaviour is occurring. Following the successful pilot of new personalised 'relational plans' for pupils, leaders are now putting in place a consistent approach to promoting positive behaviour.

Many pupils missed a significant amount of education at their previous school. Although leaders work hard with a range of agencies to improve attendance, many pupils do not attend regularly enough to benefit from the support and learning the school provides.

The school offers a careers programme that prepares pupils for their next steps. This is integrated into every subject, including SPICE, and underpins the wider personal development that pupils require to be successful. Practical activities, such as outdoor learning sessions, are a standard part of the timetable. These sessions help pupils develop their resilience, problem-solving and social communication skills. Where appropriate, pupils can study for and achieve wider vocational qualifications. This supports them in moving into employment, apprenticeships or further study. As a result, most pupils gain meaningful qualifications or rejoin mainstream settings to continue their education.

The school's management committee are dedicated to supporting leaders. They are committed to supporting leaders to make the necessary improvements. They are aware of the importance of providing greater levels of scrutiny so they can continue to hold leaders to account for delivering the school's priorities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are alert to the vulnerabilities of pupils. Pupils say they feel able to talk to adults if they need help. Staff are vigilant and carefully record any concerns. Occasionally, safeguarding records do not contain all the actions taken in response to an incident. This means that leaders may not always have a full picture of what actions have been taken to keep pupils safe.

Leaders work effectively with local partners such as the fire service or police, to provide pupils with an understanding of being safe inside and outside of school. Pupils are taught how to use technology responsibly and safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are in the process of redeveloping the curriculum. A consistent approach to implementing and assessing this is not yet in place. This means teachers are not able to identify pupils who have any gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to complete the redevelopment work across all areas and put in place consistent systems and processes to check the revised curriculum is having the intended impact.
- Leaders use a variety of systems to record information. While these are well understood by leaders, they are not cohesive, meaning trends or important information about pupils could be missed. Leaders need to embed a clear, streamlined process to support sharper analysis of pupils' well-being and behaviour.
- Many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means they miss out on vital learning. Leaders must implement a systematic analysis of attendance information so that leaders at all levels can be clear about what actions to take to improve the attendance of all pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	133675
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10250065
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Colm McKavanagh
Headteacher	Debbie McKenzie
Website	www.compass-school.net
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There are currently no pupils attending the school in key stage 1.
- Leaders use three unregistered alternative provisions and one registered alternative provision.
- The school provides an education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. In addition, some pupils have further special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some pupils have, or are being assessed for, an education, health and care plan.
- Many of the pupils have been, or are at risk of being, permanently excluded from school. When pupils leave this setting, they may return to their home school or join another mainstream education provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 headteacher, two deputy headteachers, the designated safeguarding leads, subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the management committee, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and design and technology (food and craft). For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum planning in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, speaking to staff and the chair of the management committee and discussing this with pupils.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation and management committee minutes.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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