

Inspection of Compass Community School Essex

274 Harwich Road, Little Clacton, Clacton on Sea, Essex CO16 9PY

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 December 2024

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	Good
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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?

Pupils arrive at Compass with many previous negative experiences of education. Pupils value staff taking the time to understand them and their specific needs. This helps pupils to build their confidence and resilience so they can quickly settle into the life of the school.

The school has high expectations of pupils. Clearly established routines ensure pupils understand what staff expect from them. Staff consistently reinforce these. Should a pupil need help to manage their feelings and emotions, well-trained staff support them to do this. This helps pupils to improve their behaviour. Typically, pupils work hard to reach the high expectations staff have of them.

Pupils build on what they learn in lessons through the many extra-curricular opportunities the school provides them. Trips to places such as the science museum or the Houses of Parliament provide pupils with exciting new experiences. These trips also teach pupils how to behave when using public transport.

Pupils value the way the school helps them to develop existing talents and spark new interests. Whether learning to horse ride, play the drums or practise their sketching, pupils look forward to these as highlights of their week. This in turn ignites pupils' aspirations for their future.

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

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) related to their social, emotional and mental health needs. The proprietor provides training for staff in how to teach pupils with SEND. Typically, staff are knowledgeable. They understand how to identify pupils' specific needs. Staff use information on pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) to identify the small steps of progress pupils need to make. Staff then put in place the specific strategies pupils need. Access to specialised interventions, such as music therapy, help pupils to re-engage with education.

The school has identified the important knowledge pupils need to secure across most subjects. This helps pupils to build on their understanding over time. For example, in food technology, pupils understand why measuring out ingredients precisely is important when baking. They apply this knowledge well during practical cookery lessons. Pupils achieve a range of qualifications such as GCSEs. However, in a few subjects, the school has not clearly identified the knowledge or the qualifications and awards that they would like pupils to achieve. In these subjects, pupils do not secure their understanding as well as they do in others.

A key part of the school's work is focused on supporting pupils to develop positive attitudes towards reading. The school has success with this. Dedicated reading time provides pupils with opportunities to read more widely than they have done previously. Many pupils enjoy these opportunities. The school has clear processes in

place to identify and support any pupils who may still need to learn phonics. Across the school, pupils read well and with fluency.

Teachers identify pupils' gaps in knowledge and use this information to decide what to teach. This approach helps to close many of these gaps. However, sometimes teaching is not adapted well enough to take account of pupils' prior learning. This can mean that pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to revisit learning where they need to. In other cases, teaching does not move pupils on to new content soon enough.

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a central part of the curriculum. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. Additional events complement the PSHE curriculum. External visitors help pupils to further understand the risks they face such as the dangers of vaping. Pupils benefit from individualised careers sessions. This helps pupils to know what they need to achieve to purpose their future education. All of this prepares pupils well for their next stages.

The school works effectively with parents and carers to break down some of the barriers pupils have to attending school. A renewed focus on this has brought about much success. Pupils attend school more frequently than previously. This is because they value learning, as shown by their positive behaviour and attitudes.

The school has stabilised following a period of turbulence within leadership. Leaders have made many improvements to the school. This has had a positive impact on pupils. The proprietor body has a firm understanding of how to support and challenge leaders. The governing body adds further layers of expertise. The rigorous quality assurance ensures that the school consistently meets the independent school standards (the standards) including schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders at different levels understand what the school needs to do to further enhance the quality of education pupils receive. This includes where to target support for staff to develop their subject knowledge. Staff are very proud to be a part of the Compass 'family'. They value the way leaders help them to manage their own workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- In a few subjects the school has not clearly identified some of the important knowledge pupils need to learn. In these subjects, the school has also not identified the qualifications they would like most pupils to achieve. Some pupils do not develop as full an understanding of the curriculum in these subjects as they do in others or have the same opportunities to achieve qualifications or

awards. The school needs to clearly identify the important knowledge pupils will learn over time in these subjects including, where appropriate, the qualification pathways open to pupils.

- Sometimes, teaching does not use assessment to inform and adapt learning. This can mean some pupils do not get opportunities to revisit learning while others do not move onto new content when they are ready. The school should ensure that staff understand how to use assessment to inform future teaching choices.

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	147473
DfE registration number	881/6075
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10342151
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	16
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Compass Community Ltd
Chair	Bernadine Gibson
Headteacher	Nathan Kempster
Annual fees (day pupils)	£71,709
Telephone number	07549031599
Website	www.compass-schools.org
Email address	nathan.kempster@compass-schools.org
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 November 2021 and 22 to 24 February 2022

Information about this school

- Compass Community School Essex is registered to admit up to 18 pupils between the ages of 11 and 17 years. Currently no pupils stay on at the school beyond the age of 16.
- The school operates from one site located at 274 Harwich Road, Little Clacton, Clacton on Sea, Essex, CO16 9PY.
- The proprietor body is Compass Community Ltd.
- There is a governing body responsible for monitoring the performance of the school.
- All pupils have SEND. Almost all pupils have an EHC plan relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Most pupils have had significant periods of disruption to their formal education prior to joining the school.
- Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- There have been changes to leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher joined the school in October 2023.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the proprietor and governing body, two regional directors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the national special educational needs and/or disability coordinator and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects; English, mathematics, science and PSHE. Inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, considered curriculum information, visited lessons, reviewed evidence of work and spoke with pupils.

- Inspectors met leaders, looked at curriculum plans, reviewed evidence of work and spoke with pupils about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- To check compliance with the standards, inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. They visited classrooms and toured the school site, reviewed pupil information, school policies and records relating a range of aspects of the school such as behaviour and health and safety.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors also spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also met with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Rockey

His Majesty's Inspector

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