

The Compass

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134373
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	328899
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	120
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Allan Wood
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2006
School address	307a Chickerell Road Weymouth DT4 0QU
Telephone number	01305 206530
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Age group	6–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Compass Centre is a pupil referral unit (PRU). A few students are admitted because they have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools but the majority of pupils are still on the roll of their mainstream schools (these are known as dual registered pupils) and are admitted for short periods because they are at risk of exclusion or because of medical reasons. The centre supports pupils with medical needs. Twelve pupils across the centre have statements of special educational needs and most of these are waiting to be placed in suitable long-term provision by the local authority. Recently a few pupils in Years 3 and 4 with very complex emotional and behavioural needs have been admitted to the centre. Attainment on entry varies, but overall is below the national average because of the gaps the majority of pupils have experienced in their education. The main site is based in specialist accommodation. The centre also makes use of five off-site provisions to support the education of the pupils. The Compass is part of the Chesil Education Partnership comprising the 27 mainstream and special schools within the area, where it is integral to the service for support of pupils other than those educated at school. The centre's manager is accountable to the head of the local authority's Children Out of School Service but the centre has its own management committee. Boys significantly outnumber girls. There are a few pupils from Traveller or other Ethnic Minority heritage. There are also a few pupils in public care.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good centre for learning. The partnership with mainstream and special schools in the area is outstanding. It has a significant impact on reducing the number of permanently excluded pupils within the Chesil Education Partnership. It ensures that a significant proportion of pupils, disaffected with learning on entry, are successfully engaged. At Key Stage 4, pupils receive accreditation in a wide range of relevant courses which enables them to access colleges of further education and then get a secure foot on the employment ladder in worthwhile jobs. The vast majority of pupils go on to make a success of the next stage of their lives. Pupils engage in creative outdoor activities which enable them to gain collaborative skills, working effectively as part of a team and developing confidence. At the Compass Centre pupils' self esteem grows, their behaviour improves significantly and their learning accelerates. Achievement is good. Throughout the centre there is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and so removing the main barriers to their learning. As a result of one to one support together with focused group teaching, pupils across the centre make rapid gains in reading, writing and application of mathematical skills to solve problems. Attendance is better than that found typically in a setting of this type, but there remains a small number of pupils whose attendance is poor and so their achievement is lower.

The recent admission of pupils in Years 3 and 4 with statements of special educational needs for complex emotional and behavioural needs has challenged the centre considerably in meeting their needs fully. The flexible approach in adapting a curriculum to meet their social and literacy needs well has ensured that these pupils are beginning to engage in learning. The management committee is robust in appropriately questioning the Local Authority and school to ensure the best for all pupils. This is exemplified by the triggering of the current review for provision for the younger pupils.

The vast majority of pupils who are dual registered are successfully re-integrated to mainstream schools and sustain their placements. Good support and skilful management of each pupil with tailor-made programmes enable the vast majority to gain in confidence and establish good learning habits. Opportunities are planned well to equip pupils to develop as independent and responsible citizens. Staff work ceaselessly to encourage pupils to adopt a healthy and safe lifestyle and outdoor education makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' physical fitness. Teachers have a thorough grasp of what works effectively for each pupil and plan activities which challenge them and extend their learning. Teachers do not consistently engage pupils in working out for themselves what they need to do to improve their work across all subjects. Pupils are not consistently involved in setting their own academic targets.

Good care, guidance and support underpin the pupils' good personal development and well-being. Partnerships with a wide range of external agencies are excellent and ensure that pupils' health needs are exceptionally well met. Very good work goes into supporting pupils who have sexual health or drug problems. Those who get into trouble with the police are very well supported. The Zone Manager (head of centre) is a role model to his dedicated and hard-working team. The centre's priorities dovetail with those of the Children Out of School Service as a whole, and this close cooperation successfully contributes to the lives of the majority of very vulnerable pupils being turned around. Parents are pleased with what this centre achieves for their children. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, as is the capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement and engagement in learning for the small proportion of pupils with poor attendance.
- Engage all pupils in making decisions about what they need to do to improve their work and more consistently involve them in setting their own academic targets, so as to raise their achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. The vast majority of pupils from Year 5 to Year 11 who attend regularly make good progress in English, mathematics and science, but overall standards remain below the national average because of the significant gaps they have in their education on entry. The majority of pupils make rapid gains in reading and writing. This removes barriers to learning for them and by the end of Year 11 they gain GCSE passes and NVQ accreditation in a wide range of courses. This represents good progress in relation to their low starting points. In 2008 GCSE passes included A-grade passes in English, mathematics, science, geography and history. This enables pupils to access good further education courses and most pupils are in education or employment when they leave the centre. Achievement in art is outstanding. This is reflected in the exceptionally good GCSE passes and the rapid gains pupils make in confidence and self-esteem as they express their feelings through this subject. A few pupils in Years 3 and 4 with complex emotional and behavioural needs begin to develop good social skills, engage with learning and make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make rapid gains in improving their behaviour and the vast majority of dual registered pupils are successfully re-integrated into mainstream schools and sustain their placements. However, a small proportion of pupils with complex needs underachieve because of their poor attendance. The pupils from Traveller and other minority ethnic groups achieve well. Overall, those pupils in public care achieve very well because of the high quality support they receive. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils enjoy their lessons because they see the relevance of the courses they study. As they say, 'This place helps us get to college and find jobs.' The focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills removes the barriers they have to learning and as the majority engage once more with learning they make rapid gains in confidence and self-esteem and adopt positive attitudes. Attendance is good overall and the centre exceeded the target it was set by the Local Authority in 2007–2008. Pupils show challenging behaviours related to their emotional needs, but behaviour is good overall. As pupils, with considerable support, learn to control their outbursts of anger and frustration they take increasing responsibility in managing how they deal with pressured and stressful situations. Serious behavioural incidents and fixed-term exclusions are very rare. The centre works ceaselessly to encourage pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle, as evidenced by the current 'stop smoking project'. It succeeds well with the majority of pupils, who see the benefit of regular exercise and healthy eating. The centre is at an earlier stage of development in promoting pupils' emotional health, but this is developing well. Through well-focused curriculum modules pupils learn safe practices well, such as not going off with a stranger and taking great care when using chat rooms on the Internet. The pupils express their opinions and contribute to bringing about improvements. For example, the school council made

a successful bid for funding to improve their common room. The majority of pupils learn how to manage a budget and open a bank account, but not every pupil is included in these curriculum modules. Many opportunities are taken by pupils to make a positive contribution, as evidenced in their recent involvement in the interview process for the head of inclusion. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Particularly good work is done to raise pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective in bridging the gaps in learning and extending pupils so progress is accelerated. Activities are matched well to the needs of each pupil. In a Year 11 English lesson, each pupil focused on what was required to meet exam criteria in their coursework and this raised their achievement in the subject. Relationships are excellent and pupils say that they greatly appreciate the small classes. They are not embarrassed when they make mistakes and take safe risks, which contribute to the good progress they make. Skilful behaviour management ensures pupils are kept on task. Targeted questions based on good subject knowledge supports pupils in increasing their understanding across all subjects taught. At the end of lessons pupils receive good quality feedback about their attitude to work and this lifts their self-esteem. However, the involvement of pupils in decision-making about what they need to do to improve their work is not consistent across all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is outstanding. Each pupil in this key stage has an individual learning programme tailored to their needs. The range of accreditation opportunities for Year 11 pupils is excellent and successfully enables the vast majority of them to access courses at colleges of further education when they leave the centre. There is a balance between vocational courses in hairdressing, construction and catering, and a wide range of GCSE subjects. In 2008 85% of leavers achieved basic skills accreditation. Pupils are given opportunities to develop important independent life skills, such as preparing and cooking a healthy meal on a budget. Focus on anger management and therapy through the curriculum is developing well. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme is a particular strength. Outdoor education and other out of centre provision makes a very valuable contribution to developing pupils' team building skills and self-esteem. For pupils in Years 5 and 6 and in Key Stage 3 the curriculum is good overall. The Year 3 and 4 pupils' curriculum successfully focuses on building their confidence and self-esteem. It develops their social skills such as taking turns and sitting cooperatively. There is a strong focus on developing their literacy skills through one to one support based on their identified needs and planning is in hand to improve their curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures meet current government guidelines. Risk assessments, including those for pupil behaviours, are detailed. The very few young pupils with extremely complex needs who require more frequent physical intervention to keep them safe have detailed

behaviour management programmes and all physical interventions are appropriately logged. Pupils say, 'We have an adult whom we can trust.' However, a few pupils have indicated that they don't always feel safe. The induction of pupils on entry to the centre is good, as is the support pupils are given on returning to mainstream schools. Excellent links with a wide range of external agencies benefit pupils' learning and help them improve their behaviour. Excellent support is given in respect of sexual health support and the centre's educational psychologist offers high quality counselling. Careers guidance is outstanding and highly valued by the pupils. The centre has worked ceaselessly to successfully achieve a two-week referral access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Tracking of pupils' academic progress and their improvements in behaviour over time is good. However, teachers more effectively involve pupils in setting and regularly reviewing targets to improve their behaviour than they do in setting their academic targets. The involvement of pupils in setting academic targets is not consistent across all subjects and teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The Zone Manager's vision and clear direction, which focuses on reducing permanent exclusions across the partnership and providing a high quality education for disaffected pupils, is shared by a dedicated team. Overall, this hard-working team successfully realises its vision by engaging the vast majority of pupils as learners who are keen to make a success of their lives.

Self-evaluation is thorough and detailed and the priorities on the centre's improvement plan dovetail with those in the Children Out of School Service improvement plan. Thus, joined-up thinking and planning within the area benefit very vulnerable pupils and successfully raise achievement for the majority of them. The management committee offers robust support and challenge both to the Zone Manager and the local authority. It persistently asks focused questions about the provision for pupils in public care and about the placement of pupils with statements for complex needs within the centre by the authority whilst it seeks suitable long-term provision for them. Searching questions are regularly put about the partnership working of the Education Social Work and Attendance service in improving attendance. This has resulted in an education welfare officer being allocated to the multi-agency locality team based in the centre. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this decision. The Zone Manager has carefully considered community cohesion within the context of the centre's setting and purpose. It focuses effectively on clearing away barriers to enable pupils to be re-integrated with their peers by removing their sense of isolation. The strategy has many strands, including combating occasional racist attitudes and building pupils' sense of self-worth so that they can successfully access college and other opportunities beyond the Compass.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Compass Pupil Referral Unit, Weymouth DT4 0QU

We enjoyed visiting your centre and would like to thank you for the mature and sensible manner in which you shared with us how your dedicated teachers support you and help you to achieve so well. On the days of our visit your behaviour and maturity were good. You appreciate the wide range of subjects on offer to you and your sense of humour, such as when a group of you were observed in the hairdressing salon, shows just how happy the majority of you are about attending the centre.

We think that your centre is good. You improve your behaviour and become responsible citizens who are keen to succeed in life. The majority of you attend regularly and achieve well in English, mathematics and science. You are given excellent opportunities for accreditation, including GCSEs and NVQs in a range of subjects. The teaching and curriculum at your centre are good. When you go to college the vast majority of you sustain your place and succeed. Good opportunities are given to you to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles and the majority of you respond well to these opportunities. Your Zone Manager and his dedicated team work with energy and commitment to ensure you have the best quality education possible.

We have asked your Zone Manager to improve a few things so that your centre becomes even better. We have asked him to ensure that the few pupils who do not attend the centre regularly become more active learners and so improve their achievement. We have also asked him to ensure that your teachers consistently involve you in making decisions and setting targets to improve your work. Thank you so much for welcoming us to your centre. Please support your dedicated team of teachers and other staff members in making your centre an even better place for you to be educated in.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb Lead inspector