

PASS: Positive Alternatives for Southampton Students

Compass School, Green Lane, Southampton, SO16 FQ

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have continued the determined drive for improvement that was highlighted at the time of the previous inspection. They have been highly successful in rapidly transforming the pupil referral unit (PRU) into an effective provision where staff morale is high and students make good progress.
- Students rapidly improve their attitudes and behaviour because effective behaviour plans are implemented consistently. Students feel safe.
- When students are admitted to the PRU, their attainment is low because of a history of disrupted education. However, all groups of students catch up quickly with their work and achieve well. Outcomes are good, with most students transferring back successfully to mainstream schools or moving on to college or training.
- Teaching has improved well and is now usually good, with examples of some outstanding teaching. Lessons are carefully planned and include lively activities which engage the students so that they are keen to learn. Teachers and support staff work effectively together and support staff make a strong contribution to lessons. This ensures that all students join in fully and make good progress.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been effective in developing the skills of the staff and supporting them to take on additional responsibilities. This has led to improvement in key areas such as the monitoring of teaching and school improvement planning.
- Members of the management committee know the PRU well and provide good support and challenge to drive improvement. The PRU receives effective support from the local authority.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give students sufficient opportunities to work independently, or give them clear enough guidance about how to achieve their learning targets and make their work better.
- Although students improve their attendance, with some students attending well, a small minority continues to have poor attendance records.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which four were joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Observations took place at both the Melbourne School and the Compass School sites. An inspector also visited students working at Above Bar College, which is a hairdressing training provider and one of the alternative providers used by the PRU.
- Meetings were held with the local authority’s inspector for vulnerable children and young people, the chair of the management committee and with staff and students. A telephone discussion was conducted with a headteacher of a primary school who has referred a student to the PRU.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), although too few responses were registered to gain evidence. In order to gain parents’ views an inspector therefore held a telephone discussion with a parent of a student and analysed the PRU’s records of the views of parents and carers.
- The inspectors observed the work of the PRU and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding practices, improvement planning, students’ records and assessment information on students’ progress. They analysed the 48 questionnaires which were returned by staff and heard students read.

Inspection team

Christine Emerson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Tysoe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- PASS is Southampton local authority's PRU for students who are permanently excluded or at risk of exclusion.
- The age range of students has extended since the previous inspection and the PRU now provides places for students aged from five to 16 years.
- Students aged from five to 14 years are taught at the Compass School, which is now the main base for the PRU. Students in Years 10 and 11 are taught at the Melbourne School. Plans are in place to move all students to the Compass School site by September 2013.
- A majority of students on the Compass site are dual registered, this means that they remain on the roll of a mainstream school. A large majority attends the PRU for a relatively short time before transferring to mainstream schools, with a few students moving on to special schools.
- A high number of students at the Melbourne School are permanently excluded. Most students remain at the unit until the end of Year 11 when they move on to college or training.
- The PRU uses several alternative providers, such as Above Bar College and Sportiv8. The headteacher of the PRU also manages Alternative Pathways, the local authority's alternative provision, which is based at the Compass site. Although some students who are on roll at the Melbourne School have links with Alternative Pathways, most of the students receiving this provision are not on the roll of the PRU.
- Almost all students are supported at the school action plus stage of the special educational needs code of practice. A very few students have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- A large majority of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government).
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The large majority of students are boys. A very few students are looked after by the local authority.
- The PRU holds the Healthy School award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and make all as good as the best by:
 - giving students more opportunities to work independently
 - ensuring that all teachers give students clear verbal and written feedback to help them to achieve learning targets in lessons and improve their work.
- Improve students' attendance by:
 - working with the home school liaison support workers to establish, by July 2013, a parent support group and a regular programme of activities to involve parents more fully in the work of the PRU.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students have below average attainment on entry to the PRU and have missed a great deal of learning time because of problematic behaviour, poor attendance and exclusion from school. However, they respond well to the PRU's strong focus on 'learning to learn' and quickly realise that learning is enjoyable. As a result, they generally focus well in lessons, make rapid progress and achieve well. The PRU's detailed and accurate records of students' progress demonstrate that for a majority of students the improvement in average point scores in mathematics and English is better than that expected nationally. The average point scores for students supported through pupil premium are similar to that of other pupils at the school.
- Students in Year 10 achieve qualifications through early entry GCSE in English and mathematics as well as in functional literacy and numeracy. The number of GCSE or equivalent passes gained by Year 11 leavers has risen substantially because students are now offered a wider range of courses which lead to qualifications. In 2012, students did particularly well in practical and work-related subjects. For example, students gained good marks in the Jamie Oliver home cooking skills course. This increased the number of examination credits which they achieved and enabled them to develop important life skills.
- At the previous inspection, progress was slower in mathematics and science than other subjects because of instabilities in staffing. Staffing has been strengthened, and, as a result of excellent teaching, some students in Years 7 to 9 now make exceptionally good progress in mathematics.
- There is a good focus on developing students' key skills in numeracy and literacy with whole school initiatives, such as displaying key words in classrooms, to support writing. As a result, students become more confident to record their ideas and use a wider vocabulary when speaking in class. This was evident in an outstanding science lesson where Year 8 students made excellent progress in speaking and writing about how species vary, because the teacher very skilfully created exciting opportunities for them to practise their literacy skills. Younger students are supported well to develop their reading skills and learn that reading is fun.
- A variety of work-related courses, some of which are provided off site, enable students to make good progress in acquiring skills which will help them to obtain employment when they leave the PRU. For example, students gain skills and qualifications in hairdressing through the hair services course at Above Bar College. Students enjoy this course a great deal and are well motivated to succeed and move on to take up apprenticeships in hairdressing when they leave the PRU.
- Students' work and the PRU's detailed records of their progress demonstrate that all groups of students achieve well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pupil premium is targeted effectively to raise achievement, including for those students eligible for free school meals, for example through providing mentoring and intervention programmes for identified students.
- Parents and carers, and staff from feeder schools, comment on the rapid improvements in students' attitudes to learning and the fact that many younger students are returned quickly and successfully to mainstream schools. The outcomes for Year 11 leavers in 2012 are impressive, with most students moving on to college or training and still sustaining the placement six months after leaving the PRU.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved well since the previous inspection as a result of effective monitoring linked to targeted professional development. Teaching is better at the Compass School than at the Melbourne School with examples of outstanding teaching. This is because there has been more consistency in staffing at Compass and initiatives to improve teaching are more established there. However, the PRU's leaders are addressing this issue very effectively. The very thorough records of teaching observations demonstrate that the amount of good or better teaching at the Melbourne School is improving and that there is no longer any inadequate teaching at this site.

- Where lessons are outstanding, teachers use a very well planned variety of resources to deliver extremely lively and interesting lessons that move along at a very rapid pace. This motivates the students very well so that they make excellent progress. An example of this was in an exemplary mathematics lesson for students in Years 8 and 9 at the Compass School. The teacher was highly successful in using a variety of very well planned activities to encourage the students to be active learners. The students really rose to this challenge, were very keen to work things out for themselves and made such rapid progress in learning how to use formulae to solve equations that they were soon working beyond their learning targets.
- Teachers and support staff have good relationships with students and manage their behaviour well. As a result, most lessons proceed calmly and students are well focused on learning. Any incidents of problematic behaviour are dealt with effectively so that lessons are not disrupted. Support staff are effective and good team work is a feature of all lessons. However, on occasions, teachers and support staff give students too much help to complete their work. When this happens, valuable opportunities to develop skills in independent learning are lost.
- Students know what their learning goals are in lessons because these are clearly displayed at the front of the class. Most teachers refer well to these targets as lessons progress and give students good advice to help them to achieve them. This means that the students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work. However, in a small minority of lessons, there is still not enough focus on giving students feedback about how well they are doing. Marking of students' work is good at the Compass School. All staff have adopted a consistent method to give students positive and helpful feedback. However, although there are examples of good marking at the Melbourne School this is not yet consistently established.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Systems to help students to improve their attitudes and behaviour and to defuse problematic behaviour are strong. Students in both sites and those attending any off-site provision have detailed behaviour targets which they understand. All staff know exactly what to do to encourage good behaviour, and the best way to respond to individual students if there are problems, because high quality behaviour plans are in place for all students.
- These strategies are effective and most students make good progress in learning to control their behaviour. As a result, the number of exclusions has fallen significantly. Both students and their parents and carers speak very positively about the rapid improvements which are evident in students' behaviour.
- The PRU has strong systems in place, including focused work with students, to try to improve their attendance. For example, students find it very helpful to receive texts in the morning from the PRU reminding them that they should be on their way to the unit. However, although most students' attendance improves, the attendance of a few students remains poor.
- The PRU has developed very good links with parents and carers to help students to maintain their improved behaviour when they are at home or in the local community. Parents value this highly with one parent commenting, 'I can't fault them in any way – they ring me every day to say how he is going on – we are always in contact with each other.' However, the PRU rightly recognises the need for more targeted work with parents to improve the attendance of a few students.
- Students, including younger students, say that there is little bullying of any kind, and any bullying is swiftly dealt with. Parents and students agree with staff that the PRU is a safe place.
- Timetabled 'social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional' (SPICE) sessions effectively promotes important social skills such as team work and develop students' understanding of moral issues. Good links with agencies such as Southampton's Drugs, Alcohol Support and Health Project (DASH) enable students to learn about the dangers associated with high risk behaviour such as substance abuse.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership team, which was appointed after the PRU had been placed in special measures, has provided a strong and effective framework for improvement. The headteacher is very ambitious for the PRU and communicates this effectively to staff. As a result, an overwhelming majority of staff are highly supportive of the new initiatives which have been introduced to make the PRU more effective.
- Procedures to monitor teaching are well established and effective. The headteacher is now involving middle managers well in this process. Teachers are given good opportunities to see others teach and stronger teachers are used as role models. Feedback on lessons seen gives good guidance to teachers on how to improve and observations are used well to target professional development activities. Performance management of teachers is very rigorous and there is clear evidence to show that salary progression is linked to performance.
- Improvement planning is strong and based well on accurate self-evaluation. It is strengthened by the effective involvement of the staff team and the management committee.
- The curriculum has developed well since the previous inspection. The PRU now offers a broader range of courses for students in Years 10 and 11 so that they can gain a greater number of qualifications and have good work-related experiences. However, the PRU is rightly individualising the curriculum still further so that it more closely matches these students' interests and aspirations. There are good strategies in place to promote literacy and numeracy and to ensure that all students are fully included in activities and have an equal right to learn.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and the PRU effectively prepare students to live in a culturally diverse society.
- Partnerships with parents and carers, and with a variety of agencies, are strong and promote students' achievement well.
- Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and meet all current statutory requirements.
- The PRU demonstrates a good capacity to improve further. This is because there has been good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in achievement and teaching, self-evaluation is accurate and thorough and development planning focuses well on the key areas which will further raise students' achievement.
- The local authority has a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the PRU further and provides a good range of support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee has a good knowledge of the school's achievements and outcomes. For example, the outcomes subcommittee carries out whole day visits at each of the sites to look at specific areas such as the quality of the curriculum. The management committee is effectively involved in planning new developments and challenges the senior leadership team where necessary. As a result of their positions in schools and the local authority, and through courses arranged by the local authority, members have good opportunities to access a range of relevant training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively. The management committee provides good support for the PRU, for example in working to resolve the issues relating to the split site and to bring the whole PRU together on one well-equipped site. The chair of the committee is closely involved in the performance management of the headteacher and helps ensure that, across the provision, there is a strong link between effective teaching and salary progression. The management committee knows the pupil premium is being used effectively through the headteacher's reports to the committee, and their own observations and evaluations.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133675
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	400146

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	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Jane Smith
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 November 2010
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