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Mrs Alison Parsons
Headteacher
Compass School
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Dear Mrs Parsons

Short inspection of Compass School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017 with Jo McSherrie, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have instilled a culture of care and respect throughout the school. Pupils say that they feel well supported both in their personal and academic development. A typical comment was, 'Teachers here actually understand us'.

You and the management committee have developed a strong leadership team. You work well together to bring about continuous improvements. All of the staff who responded to the online staff questionnaire say leaders treat them fairly and with respect.

Parents who were spoken to during the inspection commented on how well their children have developed positive attitudes since being at the school. They said that staff go 'above and beyond' to help their children. For example, you provide extra homework and after-school lessons for pupils who recognise that they have lost learning time and want to catch up. There is effective two-way communication between home and school. This ensures that parents always know how their child is doing.

You have worked hard to address the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. One of these areas was to give pupils clearer guidance on how to achieve their learning targets. Pupils now know their targets and what they need

to do to meet them.

Another area for improvement identified at the previous inspection was to reduce the levels of pupils' absence. You and your team have worked hard to improve attendance, and well over three quarters of pupils currently on roll now attend regularly. This has been due to a variety of successful initiatives you have introduced. However, a few pupils are still not attending well. The impact of this is that these pupils do not benefit fully from the school's good quality of education.

You and your team already track pupils' academic and personal progress, but you recognise that this could be further improved. Many pupils, especially primary pupils, are only at the school for a short time. You found it difficult to accurately track the impact of your actions on these pupils' progress. As a result, you and your leadership team have worked to develop a system that monitors pupils' progress more precisely. However, the system has yet to be fully implemented.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have rightly ensured that the welfare of pupils is the school's highest priority. All involved in the school community are committed to making sure that pupils are safeguarded against a variety of threats. Staff clearly understand their responsibilities. They know about online safety and the dangers of child sexual exploitation and extremism.

You and your staff 'go the extra mile' to build strong and trusting relationships with pupils. Pupils said staff are 'good listeners and actually do something about our problems'. Pupils said that they know staff will always try to help 'in a non-judgemental way' and this helps them to feel secure.

You work hard to ensure that pupils are safe when outside school and provide useful training, such as in kitchen safety. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we agreed to look at how leaders have checked the work of the school since the last inspection. We found that you monitor the school carefully. For example, the quality of teaching is regularly checked, and staff have challenging performance management targets. You have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. School documentation clearly identifies the next steps that you need to take. One of your priorities is to ensure that the attendance of a few pupils continues to improve. You have been successful in reducing persistent absence by 80%. However, you recognise that there is more work to do in this area so that all pupils attend well.
- During our visit we examined whether pupils, including the large percentage of disadvantaged pupils at your school, were making good progress. We found that most pupils are making good progress from their starting points. This is because

teachers carefully assess each pupil's skills and abilities when they join the school and provide work that meets their needs. You have rightly identified that the current system you use to check how much progress pupils have made is not always precise enough. It does not allow you to check closely the impact of your actions on improving progress in the short time that pupils are at your school. As a result, you and your leadership team have developed a more accurate system, which you are about to implement.

- We agreed to investigate the impact that the curriculum has on pupils' personal development. You provide a nurturing environment. Staff provide many opportunities to develop pupils' self-worth and confidence in their abilities. Parents told inspectors that staff have helped their children to understand the views of others and the impact of their actions. The strong emphasis on developing social skills helps to ensure that pupils rapidly settle into school routines. Most pupils start to re-engage quickly in their learning.
- An area of focus during the inspection was to investigate how well the school prepares pupils for the next stage of their education, employment or training. We found that the school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to explore future pathways. These are based on each pupil's interests, such as working on a farm or at a national art gallery. Your approach is successful and last year all pupils who left at 16 went into further education, training or employment. You make sure that before they leave, pupils develop appropriate skills in subjects such as English and mathematics. Last year, nearly all gained a GCSE in mathematics and nearly two thirds gained a GCSE in English. In addition, pupils achieved GCSEs in subjects such as physical education, science, art, resistant materials and graphics. Some pupils achieved level 1 or 2 qualifications in vocational subjects, such as home cooking skills and creative crafts.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the attendance of the minority of pupils who do not attend regularly
- the new system of assessment is fully implemented so that leaders can evaluate even more precisely the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, your senior leadership team and members of the management committee. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. The views expressed in the 24 staff questionnaires were taken into account. Discussions were held with pupils regarding what it is like to be a pupil at this school. We spoke to a few parents and grandparents at the start of the school day and also had telephone conversations with some parents. There were no responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. We visited all the classes and looked at pupils' books. Three off-site alternative provisions were also visited.

A range of school documentation was checked including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement; assessment and behaviour information; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; and minutes of the management committee's meetings.