Inspection of Compass Community School Willow Park

Willow Street, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax HX6 2BU

Inspection dates:	16 to 18 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	**Outstanding**
The quality of education	**Outstanding**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Outstanding**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	**Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive and flourish in the inclusive environment of this warm and nurturing school. From the moment one walks through the door, pupils are kind and welcoming. Pupils are safe and well cared for. They settle extremely well into school in a short period of time. Pupils are highly respectful towards staff and visitors.

The school's expectations for learning and behaviour are consistently high. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils' personal development is a high priority. Staff make sure every pupil achieves their best. Pupils are confident, resilient and achieve well.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. They value spending time with friends and making new friends. They welcome the support from staff. This enables them to be successful and behave sensibly. Pupils are calm and settled at social times. There is a sense of belonging with regular opportunities to spend time together out of school. For example, pupils attend award ceremonies, the school prom and the choir perform at the local theatre.

Pupils develop a secure knowledge of protected characteristics and fundamental British values. They understand the impact these have on their lives. Pupils recognise discrimination. They treat others with respect, regardless of difference or belief.

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

The highly ambitious, broad curriculum is purposefully thought through to take account of pupils' specific needs. Pupils start school at different points in the school year. Staff get to know pupils' needs and abilities quickly and thoroughly. They link learning and support accurately to the outcomes in pupils' individual EHC plans. Teachers have a secure understanding of the gaps in pupils' learning and what they need to learn to keep up. The curriculum is highly personalised to ensure pupils access learning at a stage or age-appropriate point. This supports pupils to reach their potential with great success.

Teachers are highly skilled and experienced. They have expert subject knowledge. In lessons, they present information clearly. Carefully adapted tasks connect new learning to previous learning. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding and teach activities that repeat and apply what pupils have previously learned. A wealth of strategies support pupils to engage in their learning successfully. Bespoke interventions, that include therapeutic support, ensures pupils achieve well. This helps pupils to remember their learning over time. This is reflected in pupils' work. Pupils explain what they have learned and what they need to do to improve. They are proud of their work.

Reading is the school's highest priority. Pupils read confidently, fluently and accurately. While pupils are at different stages of reading, staff have high

expectations for pupils to read successfully. Pupils have access to high quality texts. They read and are read to at least daily. Pupils at the earlier stages of reading access the phonics programme. They learn to read quickly using the sounds that they know. Books are precisely matched to pupils' reading ability. The school inspires pupils to develop a love reading. Pupils are immersed in reading across the curriculum. They talk excitedly about their favourite books and authors. They enjoy the choice of books in their classroom. Pupils enjoy earning rewards for reading, including raffle tickets that earn them a visit to the local book shop.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They thrive on the consistently embedded routines. Staff are adept at settling pupils who are new to school. They specifically teach them the routines. As a result, these pupils demonstrate positive behaviours that reflects what is expected of them. In lessons, there is a calm and purposeful learning environment. Staff skilfully support pupils to manage and regulate their emotions.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything the school offers. It is exemplary. There is a visible focus on shaping pupils for life beyond school. Staff ensure pupils understand and focus on their future aspirations. Pupils develop confidence, self-esteem and strength of character. Pupils access '50 things to do at Willow Park'. For example, they take part in a beach clean-up and visit a court. These opportunities are meticulously woven through the curriculum. These experiences help pupils develop a broad understanding of the world. They bring relevance to pupils' experiences at the school.

Knowledgeable and experienced leaders empower staff to provide the highest level of teaching and support to pupils. Purposeful training opportunities build staff expertise and confidence. This includes positive engagement with local schools and external agencies. Staff are well supported by leaders. They are confident to ask for extra support or training. They appreciate the support that they receive from leaders for their well-being.

The proprietor body and governors are skilled and well informed. They visit the school regularly and leaders at all levels work closely together providing the same supportive ethos that is immersed in the school. They fully understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and compliance by ensuring the school meets the independent school standards consistently. The school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 are met. The recent changes have strengthened the school's provision. There is a strong drive for improvement to ensure pupils continue to access the highest quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	148059
DfE registration number	381/6025
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10391798
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Compass Community Ltd
Chair	Stacy Wallace
Headteacher	Sarah Thornton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£71,709
Telephone number	014 2255 7273
Website	www.compass-schools.org/willow-park/
Email address	willow.park@compass-schools.org
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 November 2022

Information about this school

- The school's last standard inspection took place in November 2022.
- Since the previous standard inspection, the school has had 3 material change inspections. The first took place in May 2023. The school requested an increase in pupil numbers from 24 to 27 and to change the age range of pupils in the school from six to 17, to six to 18. The second material change took place in February 2024, when the school requested an increase in pupil numbers from 27 to 45. The third material change took place in September 2025, and the school requested an increase in pupil numbers from 45 to 105.
- The school is an independent special school registered to provide full-time education for up to 105 pupils. There are currently 70 pupils on roll.
- The school operates from two separate premises. The main school site is located at Willow Street, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax HX6 2BU. The second school site is approximately 2.5 miles from the main school. It is located at Willow Dean, Richmond Street, Halifax, Yorkshire HX1 5SX.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have additional needs, including related to autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Most have cognition, learning, communication and interaction needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school admits pupils from the local authorities of Calderdale, Bradford and Kirklees.
- There is a breakfast club on site, which is run by the school.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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 evaluation 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 met with the regional director, the headteacher, both deputy headteachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator.

- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors toured both school sites with school leaders, including the regional director, the headteacher and a deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- An inspector listened to pupils from different year groups reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including those relating to the standards and the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school, at playtime and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their views of the school, their learning, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents.

Inspection team

Nicola Beaumont, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jenny Thomas	His Majesty's Inspector

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