



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL LINTON PARK CAMPUS

DfE No: 886/6104

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| The quality of education | Outstanding | 1 |
| Students' personal development | Outstanding | 1 |
| Safeguarding students' welfare health and safety | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership, management and governance | Outstanding | 1 |

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Date of inspection: 29 November – 1 December 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The quality of the education provided by the school is outstanding and it meets its aims very well. All students make excellent progress in their learning. Achievement is above both national expectations and those of the school. The high quality of the teaching and the very effective manner in which teachers integrate innovative technology into their practice are significant contributory factors. The framework and processes for assessing students' work are highly effective in tracking and supporting progress and achievement. The marking of students' work is generally diagnostic and includes helpful comments about how students' can improve their work, but this is not always so. The school's curriculum is of excellent quality, providing broad and relevant educational experiences across the school, with unusual breadth in the sixth form. The students' personal development is outstanding. Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is also excellent, reflecting the high priority given to this aspect of school provision. Parents are very supportive of the school and the information that the school provides for parents is informative and often interesting. Most reports to parents are informative and positive, but they do not always explain clearly enough the progress that their children have made or how parents can help to improve their learning. Leadership and management, including governance, are outstanding due to the highly effective close collaborative partnership between the senior managers and trustees of the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- Ensure that marking across all subjects makes clear comments about what students have achieved in their work and how they can improve their work; and
- Ensure that all reports explain clearly to parents what their children have achieved.

SECTION B: INFORMATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons in both the primary and secondary departments in a range of subjects. They examined samples of the work of students across all key stages. They observed daily life throughout the school including at break and lunchtimes and examined the school's documentation, records and website. They held discussions with staff and with individual trustees. They took account of the responses of parents and students to the pre-inspection questionnaires, and whilst in school held discussions with groups of students representing each key stage. The inspectors were:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Reporting Inspector: | Mr Ted Cohn |
| Team inspector: | Mr Paul Metcalf |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

The Focus School-Linton Park Campus is an independent day school for girls and boys aged seven to eighteen in Linton near Maidstone, Kent. It is registered with the Department for Education as a school of special religious character and is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust (FLT). A Christian ethos, based on the teaching of the Holy Bible, underpins all aspects of school life. The school was established on its current site in 2008 in purpose-built accommodation, which has been further developed since. The school has three students with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and another eighteen who have been identified as being in need of extra support because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN and disabilities). It has no students with English as an additional language needs. A significant number of students have been identified as being able, gifted and talented. The school has 76 students in the primary department and 31 in the sixth form. The students come from Brethren communities in East Sussex, Kent and South London.

The school aims to educate its students to become independent self-motivating learners able to explore and develop their own personal potential in education and the wider world, whilst becoming articulate young people who are effective users of information and communications technology (ICT), with developing leadership skills, founded on the Christian values of their community.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is outstanding.

Students' learning and achievement

Students of all ages and abilities are highly motivated learners who achieve high standards and make excellent progress. Standards are significantly above the national average at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE. This is reflected in the value added scores between Key Stages 2 and 4, which have risen over the last three years and reflect significant progress in learning in relation to national measures of educational potential. Value-added and other measures of success against national criteria are of little value in the sixth form because of the diverse and wide range of courses that students take and very small numbers of students for individual courses, but scrutiny of work and lessons seen indicate that students continue to be well motivated, highly diligent and produce work of high quality.

At Key Stage 2 students develop very positive attitudes to learning, and work well individually and in groups, with particularly good levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy. By Year 7 they are articulate, numerate and self-confident, able to seek out knowledge effectively, both individually and in groups. In Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form students build very well on this excellent beginning, developing their independent learning skills, responding enthusiastically to the school's recent developments in self-directed learning (SDL) and producing work of a high quality. They are ready to start their GCSE courses in Year 9, because of the excellent progress that they have made lower down the school. The students are highly motivated and particularly enjoy the increased emphasis on self-directed learning. They organise their work well and the quality of presentation is high, reflecting their pride and satisfaction in their work.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers are well qualified, highly experienced and have an excellent command of their subject. They know their students extremely well, both in terms of their personal qualities and their intellectual abilities. They are also very well supported by the work of the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and her team in ensuring that the learning needs of students with special educational needs and those with EHC plans are very carefully analysed, so that teaching and learning can be specifically tailored to their needs. Their progress is then tracked closely in order to ensure consistent and effective progress in learning. The very close collaboration between learning support staff and teachers is a strong feature of this success. Teachers are also highly successful in challenging able, gifted and talented students, so that many achieve well above age-related expectations. The teaching enables all students to make excellent progress in their learning and achievement, so their knowledge and skills develop rapidly.

Teachers are also very successful in motivating students and stimulating their interest in developing skills to think independently and learn for themselves.

They make highly effective use of the innovative technology in the recently completed SDL centre to challenge and develop students' increasing independence and team-working skills. The successful implementation of new technology to support teaching and learning also reflects the capacity of the staff to adapt and develop their own teaching rapidly to exploit the technology. This is a striking feature of the provision. Lessons are very well planned and this, combined with highly effective teaching methods, judiciously chosen activities and careful management of time, means that lessons always proceed at a good pace and sometimes at a driving pace of learning, with not a moment lost. Resources support learning very well including through the use of the information and communication technology which allows access to school resources at school and at home.

Student behaviour is managed extremely well through the most effective way of keeping students busy and interested. Expectations of behaviour are very high and the students rise to these expectations.

The framework and processes for assessing students' work are highly effective in tracking and supporting progress and achievement. Marking is always conscientious and encouraging, but not always as clearly diagnostic as it might be. Even so, there are many examples of excellent marking and students are very positive about the support and guidance they receive from staff and how it helps them to identify the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work. The school also has a very effective framework within which to reach judgements about success in relation to the school's own aims and national criteria. This includes sophisticated initial diagnostic testing followed by the close tracking of the progress and achievement of individual students which draws on year/subject attainment targets and national predictive data and allows for very close monitoring of students' achievements, with rewards and remedial action where necessary. It also allows secure value-added judgements to be made at key points in the school.

The quality of the curriculum

The school's curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now outstanding in quality. FLT documents provide a very helpful curriculum framework from which the school draws up its medium and short-term planning for its National Curriculum courses. The syllabuses for examination courses are similarly used to good effect. The planning is meticulous in its detail and pays close attention to the needs of all students, including those with EHC plans or who have SEN and the able, gifted and talented students, where particular attention is paid to identifying ways of extending and challenging them, which was not the case to the same extent at the time of the last inspection. The effective and innovative use of technology is being used to drive teachers' planning to meet individual needs even more effectively and to create independent, creative and self-sufficient learners: a key aim of learning in curricular planning.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and of excellent quality and includes a strong emphasis on developing strong speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. In the sixth form the curriculum is unusually broad. It includes the continuing

development of English and mathematical skills for all students, GCE AS/AL-level courses and business vocational courses, related to subjects such as accounting, sales, marketing and project management, the AQA extended project, specifically developing independent learning skills, current affairs and a minimum of 200 hours work experience. Since the last inspection a wider variety and level of English and mathematics courses have been offered to students, which meet much more effectively their intellectual and vocational learning needs. Distance learning is used effectively to extend the A-level provision. Students express great satisfaction with the extent and range of the provision and feel that it provides a very effective preparation for them to take their places in Brethren communities and at the same time reach a good understanding of their responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

The curriculum for all students is enriched further through educational visits and high quality music making, which involves all students in the school in a wide range of musical activities.

2. THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of the students' personal development is outstanding. The school actively promotes fundamental values of democracy through the ethos of the school, including the high standards of courtesy and respect between staff and students and the highly effective way that students' self-knowledge, esteem and self-confidence are cultivated. Their spiritual development flourishes through the strong Christian ethos of the school and the Brethren communities that it serves. Students' aesthetic appreciation is greatly enhanced through the strength of music and music-making in the school, as well as through the work done in subjects such as art and English. It is further enriched by educational visits.

Students come from communities with high moral standards and these are sustained and developed very well throughout the school. Taking responsibility for your own behaviour and learning is a key aim of the school which students are very aware of. They rise to this challenge very well. The school enables students to identify easily the difference between right and wrong and to understand and respect the civil and criminal law of the country. The curriculum further enhances this in various ways, through work in many subjects, assemblies and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) lessons. All students study the GCSE citizenship course, where they learn about national and local government, the essential qualities of British democracy and how it functions in practice. Students develop a very good knowledge of key public institutions and services. They learn the importance of tolerance of and respect for different cultural and religious traditions, building highly effectively on work that takes place lower down the school. A key aim of the school is to ensure that students are not radicalised or promote partisan political views and it achieves this aim very well. When students are involved in extra-curricular or fund-raising activities, as in their school work, great care is taken to ensure that students do not espouse any political view or values.

Provision for careers education and guidance has developed considerably since the last inspection and now provides an excellent experience for students. The employability profile, introduced in Year 11, provides some excellent well-structured feedback for students and also important evidence of their progress in developing key qualities needed in the world of work. The management of transition to work is a strong and highly effective feature of the school. The students and their parents are very clear that they wish to go into Brethren community businesses at the end of their sixth form education. Careers education and guidance is therefore firmly based on developing their understanding of what is available in this context and on helping them to make informed choices about what they will do. The excellent features of the careers programme include presentations by students to potential employers at the business fair, where local Brethren businesses come explain what they do and students can explore job opportunities; the important role of business mentors in supporting students in their work aspirations; and the minimum of 200 hours of focused work experience undertaken by students in the sixth form. The programme provides an excellent bridge between school and work. Many students also take vocational orientated business courses during the sixth form, related to work roles that they are likely to take up, some of which extend into the first year of work. The careers education and guidance programme benefits greatly from the local business community's strong commitment to the school and its students and the vast majority of students find gainful employment within it. There are no young people leaving the school who are not in education, employment or training.

3. SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school's provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Safeguarding leaders have all undergone the appropriate level of training and carry out their roles with great diligence and understanding. They brief existing staff thoroughly on recent developments, such as Prevent training and Channel awareness, and new staff, as part of the school's extensive induction process, to guard against radicalism and the promotion of extremist views. Through assemblies, PSHEE, the ethos of the school and the communities that it serves, students recognise and support the very strong opposition to terrorism and extremism.

The school has comprehensive and highly effective anti-bullying policies, including face-to-face and cyber-bullying, with discussions including the communities from which students come, about the possibility of cyber-bullying, with the recent increasing use of computers. The point is made very clearly that any sort of bullying is contrary to the moral values of the school and its communities. Students report that there is very little bullying and, where it occurs, it is dealt with speedily and effectively. They feel very safe and valued in the school.

The procedures for recruiting and vetting staff are very secure. All the necessary procedures are followed meticulously, including the keeping of the Single Central Register and the references and other documentation to support and verify the recruitment process. Relevant staff and trustees have done safer recruitment training and one or more of these people are always present at interviews.

Where staff are used from an agency the school checks their credentials meticulously and ensures that the agency vouches fully for them.

The school promotes the safety and well-being of its students very well. Healthy eating and living is covered in a range of subjects, such as physical education and science and is a continuing theme of assemblies and the PSHEE programme. Thorough and perceptive risk assessments are carried out for in school and out of school activities, such as trips. The relevant fire equipment is in place and regular fire drills take place, with records indicating that the school is speedily and efficiently evacuated. All the relevant testing of equipment is carried out regularly. The school has more than enough trained first aiders with current certification. Admissions and attendance registers are meticulously maintained and the latter show high levels of attendance.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are outstanding. The leaders and managers are very well led by the headteacher and ably supported by trustees. They have sustained the many areas of excellence identified at the time of the last inspection and those areas identified as in need of improvement have been developed further. Some have become strengths of the school's provision, such as careers education and guidance and the provision for able, gifted and talented students.

The school's management has been highly successful in creating an ethos of continuing improvement that is shared by all staff, in which innovation is viewed as an opportunity for improvement and development. This is well illustrated by the SDL centre and the school improvement plan. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the Independent School Standards and ensure that they are implemented effectively. Their actions support the ethos of continuing improvement, ensure the safety of students and promote their well-being. In this process the school administrator has played a key role. The school's performance management system provides helpful opportunities for review and improvement, which is supported by a highly effective programme of staff development.

The school is situated in three acres of grounds in purpose-built buildings that are attractive, in excellent condition and provide an environment that is highly conducive to learning. The recently completed SDL centre encourages the use of technology to support learning very well. In classrooms, notably in the primary department, display also contributes to an attractive and stimulating learning environment for students. Good facilities are provided for students with disabilities, suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for students, as are changing and shower facilities for students of secondary school age. Medical facilities are appropriate for sick students and their medical examination.

Parents are kept well informed about the life of the school through regular newsletters, school reports and the school website. Reports to parents about their children's progress are clear and informative, with greater detail about learning

and achievement than at the time the last inspection, but there are still occasions when the quality of diagnostic comments and how the student can improve their work are not sufficiently clear, which the school is addressing. The school has appropriate complaints procedures, which are published on the website. No formal complaint has been made in the recent past.

Governance

Senior managers work very closely with the trustees of the school, who give generously of their time and bring a range of helpful skills to their oversight of the school. A continuing dialogue with senior staff ensures that trustees are well informed about all aspects of the school and provide excellent challenge and support. Initiatives such as the 'learning walk', where the trustees visit classrooms with staff, allow them valuable insights into teaching and learning. The trustees delegate much of the day to day monitoring of various aspects of the school provision, with particular regard to the Independent School Standards and the creation and development of the school improvement plan, to nominated campus coordinators, who carry out their roles very diligently and effectively. This includes careful succession planning. These trustees work very closely with senior staff and report back at trustee meetings on their activities, which are discussed fully by the board of trustees. The FLT provides much helpful guidance and support across all aspects of the provision. The recent introduction of regional principals, who are highly experienced educational professionals, to work closely with headteachers and trustees, including the appraisal of headteachers, provides an extra dimension of professional guidance, support and review. This appears a welcome development but it is too early to comment upon its effectiveness.

Trustees and senior school managers also collaborate closely on measures to promote the happiness and personal well-being of students, including to safeguard them. The students told inspectors they felt safe, happy and content.

SCHOOL DETAILS

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|----|
| Name of school: | Focus School – Linton Park Campus | | | |
| Address of school: | Heath Road Maidstone Kent ME17 4HT | | | |
| Telephone number: | 01622 740820 | | | |
| Email address: | lintonparkcampus@focus-school.com | | | |
| Web address | www.lintonpark.focus-school.com | | | |
| Proprietor: | Medway Education Trust | | | |
| Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4: | Mr T Dupont | | | |
| Head Teacher: | Mrs H Hart | | | |
| Primary Manager (Deputy Head) | Mrs K Edwards | | | |
| DfE Number | 886/6104 | | | |
| Type of school | Independent school | | | |
| Annual fees | Internally charged | | | |
| Age range of students | 7-18 | | | |
| Gender of students | Boys and girls | | | |
| Total number on roll | full-time | 215 | part-time | 0 |
| Total number of students | Boys: | 120 | Girls: | 95 |
| Number of sixth form students | Boys: | 18 | Girls: | 13 |
| Number of students with statements of special educational need | Boys: | 3 | Girls: | 0 |
| Number of students with English as an additional language | Boys: | 0 | Girls: | 0 |
| Type of inspection | Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008 | | | |

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk