

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations

INSPECTION REPORT

**INTERIM REPORT CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF FOCUS
LEARNING CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 109(1) and (2)
OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008**

Name of school:	Focus School Swaffham Campus
DfE number: Focus number:	926/6153 416 (Primary) 417 (Secondary)
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell Supporting Inspector: Mr Simon Bennett Lay Inspector: Mr Roger Hughes
Dates of inspection:	17-18 March 2015

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

Section A: Introduction and summary

Section B: Compliance with regulations for registration

Section C: The quality of organisation and maintenance of ethos

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School Swaffham Campus
Address of school:	Turbine Way Swaffham PE37 7XD
Telephone number:	01760 336939
Fax number:	01760 336990
Email address:	swaffhamcampus@focus-school.com
Proprietor:	Medeshamstede Education Trust
Chief Executive Officer:	Mr Stephen Hynd
Senior Teacher:	Mr Matthew Garrod
DfE number:	926/6153
Focus number:	416 (Primary) and 417 (Secondary)
Type of school:	Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust
Age range of pupils and students:	7-18
Gender of pupils:	Male and female
Total number on roll: (Full-time)	Boys: 81 Girls: 75
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 19 Girls: 9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 3 Girls: 0
Type of inspection:	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell
Supporting Inspector:	Mr Simon Bennett
Lay Inspector:	Mr Roger Hughes
Dates of inspection:	17-18 March 2015

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This interim inspection was undertaken at the request of the Focus Learning Trust. It was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by SIS and the Focus Learning Trust (FLT) and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). This inspection focused primarily on matters raised by the last inspection as areas for development and those raised by the school's management, in particular relating to raising further the quality of teaching and monitoring pupil progress. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's organisation and maintenance of ethos and reported on these to the FLT. The lay inspector's findings are summarised in Section C of this document.

Information about the school:

Focus School Swaffham, formerly known as Breckland Park, was formed in September 2005 through the amalgamation of two registered schools, Medeshamstede and Beechcroft. It is administered by the Medeshamstede Educational Trust. The school is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust and follows its policies and ethos. The school's principal aims are 'to have a family-oriented atmosphere where all individuals are equally valued, to encourage and enable all individuals to achieve their full potential and to equip pupils for adult life'. Pupils come from the Brethren communities in Peterborough, Norwich, King's Lynn, Lowestoft and Swaffham, and admission is non-selective.

There are one hundred and fifty-six pupils currently on role between the ages of seven and eighteen. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and twenty have been identified by the school as having various special educational needs (SEN). A further forty-four pupils are identified as being gifted or talented. The school last received a full inspection under the Section 162A Independent Schools Regulations in March 2012.

Summary of main findings:

Focus School Swaffham provides a happy and co-operative learning environment. Pupils confirm this view and that they feel well supported both academically and pastorally. The school has responded very quickly to most of the recent changes introduced to the Independent Schools Regulations. It has continued to develop positively since the last Section 162A inspection and responded well to the non-regulatory issues raised at that time, including to improve the quality of teaching to at least good or outstanding. The school has established good procedures to monitor pupils' progress, but acknowledges that some development is still needed. The curriculum has seen further development and a good start has been made to implementing the new Focus Learning primary curriculum. Teaching is good and often excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent supported by pupils' demeanour, behaviour and care for one another which emphasise the strength of their personal and social development. Their understanding of the concept of British values is effectively supported by the

curriculum and life of the school. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are well cared for and all aspects relating to their health and safety and safeguarding secure. All required staff checks are completed and recorded. The high quality accommodation has been extended and improved further, but the school does not provide showers for the use of pupils who are over the age of eleven. Information provided for parents is excellent. There have been no complaints during the past twelve months.

What the school does well:

- relationships at all levels are good;
- there is strong ethos for development and improvement; and
- the quality of leadership and management is strong.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- ensure that suitable changing rooms and showers are provided for pupils aged eleven years or over at the start of the year who receive physical education (paragraph 23(1)(c)).

What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act

Next Steps:

The school might wish to consider the following:

- to ensure that school trips are supported by a programme of debriefing; and
- to continue to develop and refine strategies for monitoring pupils' progress, including the further development of the use of short-term target setting in the secondary department.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum has seen further development during the past two years and a very positive start has been made in implementing the new Focus primary curriculum. In the secondary department the range of subjects available as examination courses has been developed with the aim of increasing the range of opportunities and ensuring that courses taken by students, particularly in the sixth form, are appropriate to their ambitions and aptitudes. A recent survey conducted by the school showed a notably high level of satisfaction amongst parents with respect to the courses taken by their children. The development of the curriculum has been a key focus for the Senior Teachers of both parts of the school and their hard work is having a beneficial impact. In the primary department, it has been an issue of keeping attention on the requirements of SATS while implementing the new Focus curriculum for the age range. This approach has benefited from the teamwork evident across those year groups.

Developments include increased opportunities for creative work through GCSE, AS and A2 courses in art, product design and graphic design, all open to boys and girls. Art is taken as a GCSE course from Year 9. Physical Education (PE) has been a key area for development and is taken by all pupils as from Year 9 as a GCSE and a Level 1 Sports Leadership qualification is available to pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that students take courses to the right level. Management emphasises the importance of achieving a balanced range of courses for senior pupils, whilst ensuring that they are stretched to achieve their maximum potential. Some increase in the use of ASDAN qualifications has supported this aim. The dynamic quality of the school choir emphasises the strength of music in the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good and often excellent sustaining and, in some respects, improving the high standard seen during the last inspection. Inspectors observed a total of nineteen lessons during this visit. No lessons were judged to be less than good and in a significant proportion the quality of teaching was outstanding. Lessons judged to be good sometimes had a number of outstanding features. Observations confirm the strength of pupils' engagement in their learning throughout the school. A process of the regular monitoring of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work implemented by the school management aims to raise the quality of teaching further.

Lessons are typified by positive relationships between teachers and their pupils. Overall planning supports the high quality of lessons but in those lessons where the structure of the activities had received the closest attention, including the timing of each part of the activities, they showed notably high levels of pace and pupil involvement in learning. The quality of lesson planning is most consistently good in Years 3 to 6. Ongoing dialogue between teachers and their pupils is a consistent strength of lessons throughout the school. Most lessons demonstrate a good balance between formal and informal features ensuring that pupils feel comfortable

to ask questions but respond immediately to any request for their attention by their teacher. Pupils listen to their teachers and are quick to respond to the teacher's expectations with regard to learning and behaviour. The best lessons provide very positive environments for learning. Classroom management is good. Dialogue between teachers and pupils and the use of questioning is a strength throughout the school.

Pupils make good progress relative to their abilities. Differentiation in lessons is good and teachers are provided with a good range of information about pupils with specific learning needs, including those with statements of special needs, in their classes. This is used effectively to provide support for these pupils. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in lessons, providing discrete support and guidance. They work with teachers effectively, and as a result pupils with special needs are encouraged to play a full part in lessons and to make good progress.

Assessment throughout the school is good and has a number of excellent features. Senior teachers work well together and express the value of sharing assessment strategies where relevant between the primary and secondary parts of the school. The use of central records has been effectively developed at the school. These are used well by teachers and provide a positive support for monitoring progress and importantly ensuring that, should a pupil fall below their predicted grade in a subject, the problem can be quickly addressed. This process is strengthened by the regular meetings held by staff to review pupil progress. Overall there are clear indications that the value of central data is understood by management and that it is increasingly playing a key role throughout the school in informing staff and supporting pupil progress. Staff have received training in the use of data, their roles in supporting the provision of data based on their own assessments and the use of data to support their planning.

The school management is not complacent and acknowledges that further development is needed with respect to supporting pupils' progress. For example, the use of target setting needs to be refined in the secondary part of the school to include greater use of short-term target setting, already a strength in the primary department. The school management is aware of some inconsistency in the quality of marking in the secondary department. This has been helpfully informed by a procedure of regular scrutiny of pupils' books introduced into each department aimed at informing management about the quality of presentation and the quality of marking. A scrutiny of pupils' work during this inspection agrees that written feedback is sometimes too brief, failing to say what is good about a piece of work or what should be done to improve it. Sometimes the quality of written comments does not always support the school's focus of improving the presentation of work. Occasionally the expression of written comments provided in exercise books show too little attention to the age of the pupil or their ability. Despite this, ongoing discussion between teachers and the pupils is good, reflecting the overall positive relationships and the positive attitudes to learning seen in classrooms generally.

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent. The school is making good progress in ensuring that it is able to meet fully the expectations of the recently introduced requirements for actively promoting respect for other cultures and protected characteristics thus enabling it to continue to fulfil its

commitment to British values. The curriculum supports these aims and is supplemented by a wide range of opportunities to develop the understanding of the pupils of the world around them, through the use of external visits and the impact of incoming visitors. External activity is particularly evident through geography and includes environmental activity in the surrounding area. This is supplemented by work in Swaffham itself. Support for charities is exceptionally strong, not least for Mercy Ships where great effort has been put in to raising considerable sums. Art and music play a large part in the life of the school and a session of songs by the choir was of high quality and enthusiastically presented and supported. The school has a well-illustrated magazine which constitutes a valuable record of what has been done and enables pupils to record their evaluation of such activities. Risk assessments and records of trips are thorough. Feedback is beneficial but the school does not ensure that all outings are subject to debriefing not only through assessment by staff but through discussion and feedback from pupils in class. Focus produces a detailed monthly current affairs bulletin which forms a strong basis for discussion.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of welfare, health and safety is extremely good. It is characterised by high levels of teamwork covering all parts of the school community. There is a determination constantly to strengthen the overall awareness of staff, trustees and volunteers in this respect through keeping up to date with regulatory requirements and the implementation of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). This has been characterised by strong links with the local safeguarding board, attendance at training by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and his deputies and trustees. Trustees have signed off all the key FLT documents and are ensuring that all staff have been trained in KCSI, have read the required documentation and are equipped to implement them. There are three qualified and trained designated persons who meet regularly to support the DSL. All staff receive annual training. Laminated safeguarding cards are given to all visitors to read. Two of the DSL team are trained in Norfolk Family Support Process early intervention programme and early intervention is a key strategy for the school. Appropriate staff have been fully trained and involved in safer recruitment. Health professionals have spoken to older students about pressure and stress. The security of the site has been a priority, and pupils speak warmly of the care they receive. The school has paid detailed attention to the conduct on buses and the supervision of pupils. The school council operates effectively and prefects enjoy the opportunities for responsibility. There is a detailed safeguarding programme.

The first aid policy is campus specific and is accompanied by a medical needs policy. Both are thorough. There are six qualified first aiders and first aid kits are available at strategic locations throughout the campus. There is a defibrillator and four personnel are trained to use it. There are notices at strategic points about first aid and the certificates are on show. The medical room is well equipped and placed alongside the administrator's office with access to key facilities. The administration is highly efficient and has access to all the required information.

Fire risk assessments have been conducted for each building on the campus and a comprehensive fire log book is maintained detailing checks on equipment and the execution of fire drills. One further detail would strengthen the record and that is to

include the day of the week on which the drills occur in order to ensure that all staff have participated in them.

Both the admissions and attendance registers are in order. Communication concerning absence is by email, but hard copies of attendance are kept until the required printing from electronic storage. Attendance is monitored on a regular and systematic basis. The admissions registers are held electronically and are again kept in detail.

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

All required staff checks are completed appropriately, and all relevant information filed and recorded.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

Accommodation is good and provides a happy environment for both students and staff. Buildings are of very high quality and in good condition with light and airy corridors. The whole atmosphere of the buildings, in particular classrooms, is conducive to learning. The premises and on site sports facilities are well maintained. The accommodation for both the secondary and primary departments is in three main buildings the last one being brought into use in 2012. In the last few months an extension has been added to provide a very welcoming entrance to the school. A live video screen in the entrance provides an interesting feature by providing constantly updated information and topics relevant to the school.

Recent water ingress in the gym block is being investigated as is the plumbing in the primary block. Both matters were being dealt with at the time of the inspection. There are First Aid points around the school and there is an adequate well stocked First Aid room which can be closely monitored. It has a locked cupboard for those medications necessary for certain student conditions. The school is aware of the need to ensure that it address the detail of all regulatory matters, but needs to clarify how the matter of the provision of showers for pupils over the age of eleven is to be dealt with.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school provides a very good range of information to parents. There has been significant development in the range and quality of information provided to parents during the last two years. This process has been supported by consultations with parents and analysis of the detail of feedback received. Helpful regular reports are provided about pupils' progress in both primary and secondary areas of the school. This regular feedback about pupils' progress supports the aim of involving parents in the process of monitoring which the school is keen to promote.

Newsletters provided regularly to parents are of high quality and are both colourful and informative. They contain very useful information about the life of the school and are enhanced by regular contributions by pupils of all ages.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The complaints procedure follows the Focus guidelines. There have been no complaints recorded during the past twelve months.

PART 8 - The quality and effectiveness of leadership in and management of schools

The quality of leadership and management is excellent. This is derived from a strongly collaborative approach to all aspects of the pupils' welfare whether within the class or beyond it. Trustees and staff alike demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and are determined to ensure that the standards are met. This is achieved through fulfilling their responsibilities and monitoring the implementation of policies closely. The wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted and acknowledged by pupils and parents. The school is very well served by a highly efficient administration.

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This section is not a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The Lay Inspector evaluated both the school ethos and the Trustees' stewardship of resources and produced an internal report for the Focus Learning Trust, which is summarised below.

The quality of the organisation and maintenance of the ethos of the school

There is clear evidence of mutual regard and respect for and between trustees, staff and students. At times a quicker response to queries raised by staff and students would be appreciated but this does not appear to hinder questions being asked. An active and positive involvement by trustees and many volunteers from the Community has supported the development of a happy friendly school. There has been positive interaction between secondary and primary departments, particularly in the last two years. The current and continuing collaboration between primary and secondary departments is appreciated by the trustees and essential in monitoring each pupil's progress as they move through the school.

The schools emphasis on PE and games is a very positive move forward, but the Trustees urgently need to consider the question of the provision of showers. The library is currently about to undergo a redecoration and to have learning booths included to encourage the use of these spaces to support the development of independent learning skills. The necessity for loading and unloading of buses at the kerb side is carefully monitored to ensure safety.

Succession of trustees and other key administrators should be carefully considered, and implemented, to ensure a smooth transition should it ever be necessary. Finance matters face the usual constraints but generally work adequately. There is no evidence of a shortage of resources in the school.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust. Further copies of the report are available from the Operations Manager of the Focus Learning Trust, Exchange Place, Poseidon Way, Warwick, CV34 6BY, or from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.