



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL SWAFFHAM CAMPUS

DfE No: 926/6153

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

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| The quality of education | Good | 2 |
| Students' personal development | Outstanding | 1 |
| Safeguarding students' welfare health and safety | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership, management and governance | Good | 2 |

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: 5-7 December 2017

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Focus School Swaffham Campus meets all of the independent school standards and its own aims. The quality of education is good. Students' learning and achievement are good. When students join the school in Year 3 their achievement is below average and they have significant weaknesses in their basic skills. The school does not tackle these weaknesses swiftly enough so they do not make sufficient progress in some subjects during key stage 2. Outcomes in grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics over the last two years, although improving, remain below average. Students' progress accelerates in key stage 3 to 5 and GCSE and A Level examination results in 2016 and 2017 were well above national averages in all measures. Teaching is good overall but it is stronger in the secondary phase than in key stage 2. Assessment is good. The school has effective procedures to check students' progress through regular tests and assessments. Gaps in students' understanding are identified and action is taken to bring about improvement. The targets set for students are challenging and progress towards the targets is carefully monitored. The curriculum is outstanding. There is a good range of academic and vocational courses at key stage 4 and 5. The development of self-directed learning (SDL) is providing students with effective learning skills which they apply to good effect in all subjects. The curriculum provided for students identified as being additionally gifted and talented meets their academic needs but the school is aware that it could be further enriched. Those students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN and disabilities) including those with an Education Health Care (EHC) plan make good progress because the management of SEN and disabilities is effective and the curriculum is well adapted to their needs. Students' personal development is outstanding. They are courteous and thoughtful individuals who are very well prepared for their future lives. The school's arrangements for safeguarding and ensuring students' welfare, health and safety are excellent. The procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff are clear, appropriate and consistently applied. Leadership, management and governance are good. The recently appointed headteacher and the campus administration (CA) team have improved much of the provision made for students and have ensured that the school is a safe and welcoming environment with a clear focus on students' achievement. Actions taken to improve students' achievement at key stage 2 have had a positive impact on students' reading and on the outcomes of key stage 2 assessments but the leadership team is aware that there is still more to do.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- improve teaching at key stage 2 so that weaknesses in students' basic skills are eradicated and they make good or better progress from their individual starting points.

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, listened to students read and held meetings with the trustees, headteacher, regional principal, senior leaders, staff and students. They examined the school's website, documents and records, scrutinised students' work and reviewed responses to parents' and students' questionnaires completed before the inspection. The inspectors were:

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| Reporting Inspector: | Mrs Christine Graham |
| Team inspectors: | Mr Martin Cragg |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Focus School Swaffham Campus is a non-selective, independent, co-educational day school for students aged 7 to 18 years. It is registered with the DfE as being of special religious character. It is affiliated to the Focus learning Trust (FLT). The school is owned by the Medeshamstede Education Trust. It opened in 2005 following the amalgamation of two predecessor schools. Students live in Swaffham and towns and villages in the surrounding area. There are 152 students on roll. Twenty-five students have been identified as having SEN and disabilities and three students have an Education Health Care (EHC) plan. Twenty-five students are identified as being gifted and talented. There are no students with English as an additional language. A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection and there have been changes to the board of trustees and the campus administration (CA) team. The school aims to: *have a family oriented atmosphere where all individuals are equally valued, to encourage and enable all individuals to achieve their full potential, to provide a safe and positive learning environment where students can develop morally, physically and spiritually, to equip students for adult life, to provide opportunities for independent learning, to promote active community involvement and a good home/school partnership, to be an integral part of, and an asset to, the local community and to offer a broad and balanced curriculum for all students enrolled at the school.*

The school was last inspected by SIS in March 2015.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Students' learning and achievement

Students' learning and achievement are good. When students join the school in Year 3 their achievement is below that expected nationally. There are weaknesses in their basic skills, particularly in their handwriting, letter formation, their knowledge of phonics, spelling patterns, grammar and punctuation and in their ability to apply mental strategies in mathematics. Work seen in students' books indicates that the school does not tackle these weaknesses swiftly enough so students' progress in key stage 2 is not as rapid as it might otherwise be. In 2016 the outcomes of standardised tests taken by students at the end of key stage 2 were below the national figure in grammar, punctuation and spelling and well below in mathematics. Reading results were above the national figure. In 2017 outcomes in all subjects improved and results in reading and writing were above the national figure. Outcomes in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling also improved but remained below average. Only 53% of students reached the expected standard in all three subjects compared to 61% of students nationally.

Students make very good progress in key stages 3 to 5. The quality of their work in all subjects improves significantly. In 2016 and in 2017 students' results in GCSE and A Level examinations improved and were well above national average in all measures. At GCSE, 84% of students achieved a strong pass (grade 5) or better in both English and mathematics. Over a third of results (37%) were at either A* (8 or 9) or A (7). The proportion of students achieving the English Baccalaureate (EBAcc) standard was high. Students made at least good progress in the majority of subjects. Most sixth formers exceeded their targets and over half of the grades at A Level were A* or A. Performance in vocational subjects was also strong.

Students' speaking and listening skills are good throughout the school. They can explain their learning and they listen attentively to their teachers and their peers asking perceptive questions to clarify their understanding. Students' learning skills are very well developed. They work well independently or with a partner or group. They can collaborate with their peers and carry out individual research. Students complete individual projects to a very high standard.

The range of courses offered in key stage 4 and 5 ensures that students with SEN and disabilities, including those with an EHC plan, make good progress and achieve well. Their progress is closely monitored and reviewed each term. The school offers opportunities for gifted and talented students to take part in activities such as Young Enterprise and Mathematics Challenges, as well as taking some additional GCSEs. SDL provides opportunities for greater challenge in their work which deepens their understanding. However, the school has identified that the provision made for these students could be further developed and inspectors agree that there is scope to broaden their experiences.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are good. Teaching is good in the secondary phase and in the sixth form. Teaching in key stage 2 is less effective because it is not always well enough adapted to students' needs. Where teaching is most effective it is well planned and based on previous assessment so that it meets the needs of all students in the class. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use well in lively and interesting lessons. Students are provided with well-targeted guidance which deepens their understanding and corrects any misconceptions. In these lessons SDL is used very effectively so students have good opportunities to collaborate with their peers, carry out their own research, pursue areas of interest to them and work independently, consolidating their learning. Students are encouraged to solve problems or ask a friend for advice before turning to the teacher for support. This develops self-reliance and perseverance. They can explain their learning and how they have carried out their tasks. In these lessons teachers' expectations of students are high and there is a clear focus on students' achievement. Where teaching is less effective the pace of teaching is slow, teachers lack the necessary subject knowledge and all students do the same task so the work is too easy for some students and too difficult for others. For example, in mathematics at key stage 2 students spend too long consolidating previously mastered concepts and have too few opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to new learning. Teachers do not eradicate weaknesses in students' basic skills quickly enough and they do not provide enough support to ensure that these weaknesses are not a barrier to new learning. The introduction of specialist teaching in key stage 2 extends students' knowledge and understanding in physical education (PE), music, French, science, design technology (DT) and food technology and ensures that they are well prepared for key stage 3. Teaching assistants are effective and well informed so they add value to students' learning.

Assessment is good. The school sets very challenging targets for students. Their progress towards their target is monitored using past GCSE, A Level and key stage 2 test papers. Tests and assessments are carefully marked and any gaps in students' knowledge and understanding are identified. Interventions are put in place to help students to catch up. Students can see how well they are progressing because they record the outcomes of assessments on 'flight paths' which give a clear visual indication of any acceleration or decline in their achievement. Books are marked in accordance with the school's marking policy and students receive effective oral feedback during lessons.

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets the aims of the school and it is very well adapted to students' needs and interests. Curriculum planning is highly effective; it exemplifies the very high expectations the school has for students and leads to exceptionally good progress for students of all abilities. The curriculum at key stage 2 and in Years 7 and 8 is based on the National Curriculum, with some adaptations. The use of specialist GCSE and A Level teachers in many subjects at key stage 2 ensures that students' develop the subject specific skills they will need in key stage 3. The curriculum in Year 9 and

in key stages 4 and 5 is based on examination requirements. Students begin GCSE courses in Year 9, the three year course ensures that they are well prepared for examinations and achieve well. The school offers a very good range of courses in key stages 4 and 5, all of which align with current government requirements and allow students to reach benchmarks such as Attainment and Progress 8 and post 16 achievement measures. Sixth form students can choose A Level courses from a good range of options which meet their needs and interests. Students study some subjects through the virtual classroom (VC); outcomes in these subjects are high. French is taught throughout the school and all students take London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) courses in public speaking. LAMDA examination results are very good with almost all students achieving merits or distinctions; the school's aim is for sixth form students to reach Grade 8 by the end of their time in school. Access to public speaking courses ensures that students' oral skills are very well developed. When students presented work to their peers, the quality of their presentations was very high.

A high proportion of curriculum time is spent on SDL. This is embedded in key stages 3 to 5 and it is developing in the primary phase. SDL has a very positive impact on students' achievement because they are taught how to learn and they have good opportunities to develop learning skills. They assess the quality of their learning and decide when support or clarification from the teacher or their peers is needed. They persevere even when they find tasks difficult and they are very resilient and deal with setbacks well. They deepen their knowledge and understanding in all subjects and can apply skills across the curriculum. SDL provides students with opportunities to pursue their own interests through individual projects where they develop research skills and the ability to check information for accuracy. SDL allows students to work in their preferred learning style because they can record their learning in a variety of forms. Using the skills acquired in SDL students can evaluate new information and make decisions based on evidence. They communicate ideas very precisely using appropriate technical vocabulary. Students' information technology (IT) skills are very well developed. Technology underpins the curriculum; it is used very effectively in an aid to SDL, to deepen students' learning in all subjects and to facilitate older students' access to virtual learning.

The curriculum is very well adapted to the needs of students with SEN and disabilities. The school identified that GCSE and A Level courses do not meet the needs of all students so a very good range of Level 1, 2 and 3 courses have been introduced. Some courses are vocational while others provide students with academic skills and knowledge in a more accessible form. This provides students with qualifications which prepare them well for their future lives. The curriculum provided for students identified as being gifted and talented meets their academic needs. SDL ensures that they can extend their knowledge and skills and work at their own pace but there is potential to further extend the provision made for them.

Transport arrangements mean that it is impossible to provide extra-curricular activities at the end of the school day but the school makes every effort to enrich students' learning. Students participate in the local mathematics challenge where they compete against students from other schools. The choir takes part in

in regional events. There is a well-organised enterprise programme for sixth form students who also benefit from a number of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. There are day visits to places of interest, usually based on a curriculum theme, including visits to museums and field trips. The school is involved in regional events such as Crucial Crew, organised by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and sporting events with other Focus Schools.

2. THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent. They are courteous to staff and visitors and show genuine care and concern for their peers. The house system, transport arrangements and shared teaching spaces ensure that students of all ages get on well together. Some parents commented that students new to the school had settled in very easily, were happy and had made friends. Students say that they feel safe and that there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. Students' attendance is good and they say that they enjoy school. They are very effective learners. They can apply existing knowledge and skills to new situations and this promotes their confidence and ensures they relish new challenges and persevere even when they find tasks difficult. Students have an appreciation of the difficulties faced by people in Britain and in other countries and they raise significant amounts of money for charity. Links with the local community are developing. Students cook meals and sing for residents at a local care home and there are opportunities for them to participate in events with local schools. The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is good. Students have an awareness of other faiths and cultures and they have a secure understanding of life in modern Britain. They understand British values and they have a clear sense of moral purpose and understand right from wrong. Students' develop their understanding of democratic processes during Democracy Week and when voting for school council representatives. The school council is active and students say that that their views are listened to and that they make a difference. They understand equalities legislation and know that some activities or events may need to be adapted to make them accessible to all. There is a well-structured personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) and citizenship programme which extends their understanding and gives them the skills to deal with issues in their own lives, for example, in handling stress and anxiety. Healthy lifestyles are promoted very well. Students are taught about sensible eating and they are encouraged to bring healthy lunchboxes. Exercise and physical activity are promoted through the taught curriculum and through opportunities to engage in physical activities during social times. Students were involved in re-designing some areas of the school and they raised a significant amount of money to fund the refurbishment. This provided first-hand experience of economics. Their leadership skills are promoted well through their roles as school council representatives or prefects. They receive a well-rounded education and develop a strong awareness of culture in its widest sense through the taught curriculum, arts week, the talent show and their participation in the senior choir. The careers advantage programme (CAP) provides older students with very effective careers advice and guidance which prepares them well for their future lives.

3. SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The arrangements for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has undertaken advanced safeguarding training in order to fulfil her safeguarding duties effectively. The deputy DSL is also well trained and experienced. The school has an up-to-date policy for child protection and safeguarding which is understood by all staff. Staff are fully trained to keep children safe and there are effective links with outside agencies. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and highly effective so that students are safe and extremely well cared for. In questionnaires and interviews students confirmed that they feel safe in school. They say that staff know them as individuals and that they care about their welfare. Students say there is a strong family ethos and they see this as a strength of the school. Students know who to talk to about any concerns and this is supported by prominent posters and information displayed around the school. Teachers have had Prevent training and the school is rigorous in its duty to protect students from the risk of radicalisation and extremism. Visitors to the school are provided with guidance about the behaviour which is expected of them, including the use of mobile phones while in school.

Staff are very aware of the importance of e-safety, and students are given regular training to ensure they are aware of how to stay safe online. Students sign an E-charter to show that they will follow safe practices when online. Students are sensitive to the dangers of bullying and have a good understanding of its various forms. They are confident that they can report any incidents to staff and that they would be dealt with promptly. They say that there are few incidents and that they are mostly at a low level. The school is rigorous in recording the few reports of bullying and the action taken to resolve them. There was a recent anti-bullying week which was followed up by a range of student initiated activities. Students confirmed their support for anti-bullying activities and outlined how older students take care of younger ones

The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are extremely rigorous. School leaders who are involved in the recruitment of staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. The single centre register of staff checks is very thorough. It contains a comprehensive record of all the most recent staff appointments and the school has made every effort to update the register in cases where information recorded in the past was not fully compliant.

Health and safety requirements are met in full. There are thorough risk assessment policies and procedures for pupil activities on site and during visits out of school, which are implemented consistently. Fire safety, first aid provision and all necessary equipment tests meet the regulations. Students with medical needs are identified and their welfare and health needs are monitored. A suitable medical room is available in the event of a pupil being unwell or injured. Accidents are dealt with appropriately and staff record incidents. Accidents or injuries reported during PE lessons are closely monitored to ensure that they were unavoidable. The school places a strong emphasis on the security of the

school site and access is carefully controlled. Key staff and trustees conduct regular inspections of the premises and take immediate action to correct any issues. Specialist teaching areas are well maintained, tidy and safe with very good storage of materials. Cleaning and maintenance are very efficient.

Students are well supervised. There is a clear behaviour and rewards system which students understand and support. Staff supervision at breaks, lunchtimes and arrival and departure by minibus is thorough, ensuring students' safety. Admission and attendance registers meet all requirements and are maintained accurately. Attendance in 2016-17 was above the national average at 96.2%.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher and trustees have a clear vision for the school which is understood by staff and students. They have successfully improved much of the school's provision and the progress made by students. Changes to the National Curriculum, GCSE and A Level examinations and the curriculum delivered in Focus schools, including the increased emphasis on SDL, have been implemented successfully. Leaders have ensured that staff were well equipped to deal with these changes by providing effective training and development and by paying attention to the well-being of staff. The headteacher has introduced a coaching model to the school whereby staff share good practice and receive feedback from their peers and from senior leaders. Performance management is effective and has brought about the improvements in teaching in key stage 3 to 5. Leaders are aware that there is still more to be done in key stage 2, but improved outcomes in key stage 2 tests in 2017 indicate that early action has been effective. Induction procedures for new staff, particularly those at the school on a temporary basis, are thorough. A new senior leadership team has been appointed from within the school. Newly appointed leaders have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are adding value to students' education. School improvement planning is effective and leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas which still require development. The leadership and management of SEN and disabilities are good. The progress made by students is carefully checked and the provision made for them is very effective. The management of safeguarding is excellent. Safeguarding is an integral part of the school and there is a culture of vigilance where students' welfare is actively promoted. The school's policies are regularly reviewed and take account of all statutory guidance. The school building is well designed and well resourced. It is maintained to a very high standard and meets the independent school standards.

The school's partnership with parents is effective. Parents' responses to the questionnaire, although few in number, were nonetheless very positive. A number of parents commented on how well the school was providing for their children and how well students new to the school had settled in. A few parents had concerns about the progress made by their children. Inspectors agree that students in key stage 2 do not progress well enough in some subjects but this is not an issue in the secondary phase. Parents receive a very good range of

information about their child's progress, including five written reports and three parent consultation evenings per year. There are regular newsletters produced by staff and students. The school's website provides all the required statutory information. The complaints policy meets requirements and there have been no complaints in the last year.

Governance

Governance is good. School management has been restructured and the role of trustees is clearly defined. This has improved accountability. The campus administration (CA) team is well supported by other trustees who take on non-executive management roles within sub-committees, many of which are designed to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards. The trustees receive good quality information from the headteacher so they are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. The CA team is becoming more confident in their leadership role and they are beginning to hold the school to account for all aspects of its provision.

SCHOOL DETAILS

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| Name of school: | Focus School Swaffham Campus | | | |
| Address of school: | Turbine Way Swaffham PE37 7XD | | | |
| Telephone number: | 01760 336939 | | | |
| Email address: | swaffhamcampus@focus-school.com | | | |
| Web address | http://swaffham.focus-school.com | | | |
| Proprietor: | Medeshamstede Education Trust | | | |
| Chair of trustees: | Brendon Dunham | | | |
| Head Teacher: | John Shanahan | | | |
| DfE Number | 926/6153 | | | |
| Type of school | Independent school | | | |
| Annual fees | charged internally | | | |
| Age range of students | 7 to 18 | | | |
| Gender of students | mixed | | | |
| Total number on roll | full-time | 152 | part-time | 0 |
| Number of children in registered nursery | | 0 | | 0 |
| Number of children under-5 | Boys: | 0 | Girls: | 0 |
| Number of compulsory school age students | Boys: | 62 | Girls: | 51 |
| Number of post-compulsory students | Boys: | 20 | Girls: | 19 |
| 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.