



## **SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE**

### **INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL, DUNSTABLE CAMPUS**

**DfE No: 823/6019**

#### **The key inspection judgements for this school are:**

<b>The quality of education</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' personal development</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>

#### **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: 10-12 November 2015**

## **SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

Focus School Dunstable Campus is a good school. It fulfils its aims and the pupils say that they enjoy school and are happy to be there. The quality of education is good overall and both the curriculum and the teaching have some outstanding features. This enables pupils to progress well and reach high standards in public examinations, particularly in design technology. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects in both the primary and secondary parts of the school. Assessment is good, although the quality of marking varies in different sections of the school. At present, information regarding pupils' performance is used mainly for the current year rather than to track longer term progress and inform target-setting. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent. By the time pupils leave the school they have become mature and responsible young people. Pastoral care is good. Careers guidance has many strong qualities but does not give sufficient attention to wider occupational choices within the community. Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Leadership is good and the impact of the new headteacher has been positive. The school's approach to management has been partly revised, with the new headteacher having whole school responsibilities rather than only for the secondary section. The school leaders and managers know the independent school standards well and monitor their implementation effectively to ensure that they are all met. Governance is good. The trustees have worked hard to develop a supportive system which includes succession planning and specific responsibilities, supported by assistance teams from within the community.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- make better use of performance data to improve target-setting and show pupils' progress over time in each key stage and across the school;
- improve the consistency of teachers' marking;
- continue to extend the range of career options; and
- continue to develop the whole school approach to management, reviewing and defining management responsibilities to ensure that there is consistent support and that lines of accountability are clear.

## 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 pupils across all key stages. They observed daily life in the school including at break and lunchtimes. They 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 pupils to the pre-inspection questionnaires, and whilst in school held discussions with groups of pupils representing each key stage.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Dr Martin Bradley
Team inspectors:	Mr Ted Cohn Mr David Young
Lay inspector:	Mr Colin Blake

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Focus School, Dunstable Campus is an independent day school. It was first registered in 2003, and has primary and secondary sections on the same site. The school also has a primary section in Northampton which is registered separately with the Department for Education (DfE).

Focus School, Dunstable Campus has a distinctive Christian religious character and is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust (FLT). Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area of about 50 miles radius and the great majority travel to and from school by minibus.

The school's mission statement indicates that it is '*committed to providing quality, first rate education to young men and women who are devoted to Christian beliefs and morals*'. There are 178 pupils on roll. Twenty-six pupils are identified as having special educational needs or learning difficulties (SEND) including one with a statement. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.

## **SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum at Focus School Dunstable Campus is good. The school follows the National Curriculum using the Focus guidance for most subjects and reflects the aims and Christian ethos of the school. The curriculum is supported effectively by appropriate policies and planning. It is well resourced. A good range of learning opportunities is used well throughout the school to promote the pupils' learning and development, taking appropriate account of their varying abilities and aptitudes. This includes provision for those pupils identified as able, gifted or talented, as well as those with SEND.

Curriculum planning is differentiated appropriately to support all pupils. This includes the mixed age groups in the primary department, although it has been decided that separate year group teaching for mathematics is more appropriate for the current Year 5 and 6 pupils. This arrangement is working effectively. In Key Stage 2 the curriculum includes French, music and swimming. Good use is made of the nearby playing field for games. The secondary curriculum is broad and includes ICT from Year 9, with the older pupils also studying food technology, resistant materials, life skills and textiles as well as more traditional subjects. Ten subjects are offered at GCSE level. The sixth form students are offered a good range of subjects with fourteen at AS level and seven at A2. There are also a number of level 1, 2 and 3 courses including City and Guilds and BTEC.

Pupils identified as having SEND receive good support, with regular reviews of their progress. There is close liaison between the learning support staff and class teachers. Support given varies from short term help to extended interventions which are planned well to address pupils' identified needs. There is a good recording system and assessments are thorough. A group of senior boys have recently been developing a nature garden at the front of the school. This project has been well matched to their interests.

#### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is good and it has several outstanding features. In the best teaching, throughout the school, the excellent teacher-pupil relationships support a very positive learning atmosphere. The ways in which themes will be developed are well explained and the pupils are able to see links with other subjects. This is most evident in cross-curricular work, such as in Key Stage 2 where links are made effectively between work in English, including poetry, and Anglo-Saxon history as well as other areas, so that pupils readily see the connections. The teaching in mixed age groups for Years 3 and 4 and for Years 5 and 6 is carefully monitored.

The quality of assessment is good. Pupils' work is reviewed and marked regularly by staff, but the quality and usefulness of marking varies and is in general more detailed and informative in Key Stages 2 and 4. Teachers' comments provide encouragement and indicate ways in which the pupils can

improve their work. This analytical approach often includes specific targets. Less supportive marking simply indicates that work has been completed. Pupils have a generally clear understanding of their own attainment, although they are less certain about this where marking does not indicate ways of improving their work.

The school's use of assessment data has largely focused on end of year targets which can be related to pupils' current performance. For Years 10 and 11, longer term targets are provided such as for predicted GCSE grades. In other key stages, there is little evidence of pupils being set targets beyond the current year, such as predictions being made for end of key stage performance, although the school does have the data which would enable these to be made. The lack of targets for whole key stages restricts longer term target setting and the subsequent analysis of progress. In Key Stage 2 information from pupils' previous schools, where available, is used to set targets in Year 3.

### **Pupils' learning and achievement**

Pupils' learning is good and sometimes outstanding. They achieve well and make good overall progress. Pupils with SEND also make good progress, with support being well-tailored to their individual needs. There is close liaison with the trustee responsible for curriculum and learning support. He is also well informed about provision for the gifted and talented pupils who make good progress mainly through differentiation in planned work.

Examination results at 16+ and at 18+ are generally good and above national averages, although the relatively small cohorts make year on year comparisons difficult. In 2015, 90% of students achieved at least five GCSE A\* to Cs including in English and mathematics. The school recently won the Good Schools Guide for the best design technology GCSE results in an independent school in England. Results in the sixth form were broadly in line with individual targets and are broadly in line with national results.

Pupils of all ages acquire good speaking and listening skills. They write for a good variety of purposes and employ a wide vocabulary, showing a good awareness of grammar and syntax. They are able to apply their mathematical knowledge effectively in a variety of other subjects.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent overall. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme and the citizenship course, which is taken by pupils as a half GCSE, provides comprehensive coverage of all the relevant topics and is particularly strong in the areas of politics, economic understanding and preparation for adult life. This is supplemented by various assembly topics, such as respect for others and the dangers of extremism, and cross-curricular days covering topics as diverse as alcohol abuse and the Armistice. Together these make rich and varied provision for personal development. The school has excellent links with the community that it serves and is very successful in fund raising for local and national charities.

Careers education and guidance has many positive features. Pupils can draw on the Careers Advantage Program (CAP), which helps them clarify their interest and aptitudes and match these to future career opportunities. Work experience and business placements in Year 11 and the sixth form help to ease the transition from school to work in an effective manner. Mentors also play an important part in this transitional process, as well as helping to motivate pupils and inculcate in them the importance of developing a strong work ethic and good work habits. As a result, pupils feel well prepared for work and happy about the immediate occupational opportunities for them. Less attention is paid to exploring wider occupational opportunities for pupils.

The school is clearly successful in promoting British values of democracy. Pupils come to the school with a clear and highly appropriate moral code from their community, which very effectively complements and supports moral development as they progress through the school. From an early age pupils are very much aware of right and wrong and the importance of being considerate and respecting the rights of others. Likewise, they have a clear understanding of the need for laws and learn about the difference between civil, criminal and common law and wider aspects of human rights. Teachers provide good models of respect and courtesy in the relationships with pupils. Through their relationships with pupils and the creation of mutual trust and common endeavour, teachers help to ensure progress in learning and high levels of achievement, which develop pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge well. The increasing emphasis on self-directed learning, particularly for older pupils, is also encouraging greater self-reliance and the more reflective approach to learning, which is supported effectively by the work of mentors.

Social development is strong and, by the time pupils leave the school, they have become mature and responsible young people aware of and happy to take on their responsibilities in school and the adult world. They enjoy and exercise responsibilities effectively, such as in the school council or the mentoring of younger pupils. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is excellent.

Various opportunities for cultural development are provided through PSHEE, such as learning about values and practices of different world religions, through subjects such as art, English, history and geography. These help pupils develop an understanding of different cultural and religious traditions. Pupils learn less about the diverse and changing nature of the United Kingdom and its constituent parts.

The school supports the personal development of its pupils through its activities and ethos. These various contributions have not been brought together in an overview of how all aspects of the school's provision contributes to their personal development. This has been identified as a priority in the school development plan. Pupils expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school when responding to a questionnaire.

### **3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are outstanding and meet the regulatory requirements. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are comprehensive and based on current statutory guidance. The school's policy documentation is kept under regular review and is updated promptly in the light of revised DfE guidance. The most recent audit of safeguarding policy and procedure was completed in October 2015.

As a result of consistent, well managed arrangements, pupils state that they feel safe in school. They recognise that the premises provide a secure environment for effective learning. The school's policy presents a wide-ranging definition of safeguarding and includes appropriate attention to current requirements, such as protection of young people against child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The school's arrangements for e-safety are comprehensive and robust.

All members of staff receive appropriate training in child protection as part of their induction. Training is updated annually. Two senior members of staff have been trained to the appropriate level as designated lead persons for safeguarding. They provide appropriate support for all staff and manage effectively relations with external agencies. There have been very few safeguarding concerns within the school since the last inspection. In rare cases of concern, senior leaders have ensured appropriate support and action on behalf of pupils in consultation with parents. Arrangements for communication with the local authority designated officer, social services and external agencies are set out clearly in school procedures. Appropriate records are kept of any concerns and actions taken to address these. These records are stored confidentially and securely.

The school has comprehensive policies and procedures for the management of behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Staff provide effective challenges to discriminatory language or stereotyping and incidents of bullying are rare. Students state that they are confident that staff know them well and take appropriate steps to ensure that each individual is made welcome in the school community.

Pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles. Themes and activities within the curriculum include attention to healthy eating and the benefits of regular exercise. Risks associated with smoking and substance abuse are also addressed appropriately. Provision for the medical care of pupils is good.

Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are rigorous and comprehensive. Trustees work closely with the headteacher to ensure that all required checks on staff suitability are completed and a summary recorded in a single central register. Attendance and admission registers meet the regulatory requirements.

Welfare, health and safety are given a high priority through robust planning, monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness. There are strong arrangements for

regular checking and testing of all aspects of premises safety, including fire safety. Routine checks are recorded diligently and an excellent electronic recording system provides up-to-date and effective alerts to any required training or safety actions. Potential risks arising from activities in school and off-site are assessed thoroughly and appropriate actions taken to protect students.

The involvement of the trustees and the community makes a major contribution to the school's capacity to provide and maintain outstanding levels of welfare, health and safety across all areas of school activity.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management are good overall, although some aspects are less well developed. The school's Christian ethos permeates its work and is clearly understood and supported by pupils, staff and Trustees.

The head teacher, who took up post at the start of the present term, has reviewed much of the school's organisation and work. He is well supported by the Trustees and staff, who appreciate that he is moving the school forward. Most of these recent developments have yet to be fully implemented, although his appointment clarified the structure of the Dunstable Campus as a single school led by one person and not two departments as was previously the case. The school development plan identifies appropriate areas for consideration. It is a useful document which can enable, inform and facilitate development.

The new head teacher has begun to develop staff roles, by providing individuals with specific tasks. These include monitoring the quality of marking and feedback provided by teachers, to consider the impact of the curriculum and teaching, and review staff curriculum planning. These are appropriate developments which are intended not only to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum, but also to promote consistency throughout the school.

The staff recognise that the school is developing its vision and organisation. Recent developments within FLT have been welcomed by the staff as providing increased contact and support from colleagues in other FLT schools regionally and nationally, as well as the support provided by the FLT headquarters staff. Administrative procedures, including those related to safeguarding are effective. Performance management of staff is appropriate and is being reviewed.

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory and meet all the regulatory requirements. The information for parents is readily available and comprehensive. The responses from parents to the questionnaire were very positive. The regulations relating to handling complaints are fully met.

##### **Governance**

The governance of the school largely rests with the trustees, although FLT provides considerable support both through documentation and more personal

support to staff at both regional and national levels. This is much appreciated by the staff. The trustees are well aware of the management needs of the school. Their shared vision for the school's development is evident, for example, in their support in prioritising FLT's wish for its schools to achieve the dyslexia friendly quality mark.

Each trustee has specific responsibilities and this arrangement promotes effectively the efficient running of the school. This is evident in many aspects of the school's work, including support for work with pupils with SEN or those who are gifted and talented. The school is well resourced. All aspects of administration and regulation are covered within the defined remit of the trustees.

The Campus Administrator is the main link between the Trust and the head teacher on a day to day basis. They meet formally at least once a week, often with another Trustee present so that a specific aspect of the school's work can be discussed. A trustee succession plan has been developed to ensure the smooth handing over of responsibilities from the current post holder to their 'shadow'. This is a particularly useful arrangement which has enabled the school to move forward with a clear sense of purpose.

The head teacher and trustees work well together. At present the internal management structure of the school is broadly non-hierarchical with management being focused on the headteacher's role. Some members of staff have specific areas of responsibility which extend beyond individual tasks, but these are not regarded as management roles. The internal management structure of the school remains under review. There is an accepted need to develop whole school approaches to aspects such as cross-curricular work, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and planning, and the use of data to predict and monitor pupil progress.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School, Dunstable Campus			
Address of school:	Ridgeway Avenue, Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 3EA			
Telephone number:	01582 665676			
Email address:	dunstable.campus@focus-school.com			
Web address	www.dunstable.campus@focus-school.com			
Proprietor:	Sceptre Education Trust			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Mr Charles Magee			
Head Teacher:	Mr Toby Nutt			
DfE Number	820/6019			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	N/A			
Age range of pupils	7-18			
Gender of pupils	Male & female			
Total number on roll	full-time	178	part-time	0
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	73	Girls:	79
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	14	Girls:	12
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	1	Girls:	0
Number of pupils 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](http://www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk).**