



## **SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE**

### **INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL PLYMOUTH CAMPUS SCHOOL**

**DfE No: 879/6010**

#### **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>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</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: 19 – 21 January 2016**

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

The Focus School Plymouth Campus is a good and improving school that provides a good quality education for its pupils and fulfils its aims well. Pupils make consistently good progress in their learning and their achievement is good. There is a good curriculum with a strong focus on vocational courses, so that pupils are well prepared for adult life and their chosen careers. Teaching is good overall. Very few examples of teaching were observed that were less than good, and there were several examples of outstanding practice. Over time this enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Although there is some excellent practice and all pupils' work is marked regularly, some marking is not diagnostic and does not include the setting of targets for progress that can be so helpful to pupils' learning. The personal development of pupils is good, with some outstanding features. These include excellent behaviour, very positive attitudes to learning and excellent relationships with peers and teachers, underpinned by a strong moral code, together with recognition of pupils' developing roles in supporting and sustaining a happy, cohesive and effective learning community. Pupils have a keen appreciation of the importance of respect and tolerance in a pluralistic society and support strongly British democratic values. The school has taken measures to ensure that pupils are not drawn into extremism. Nevertheless, pupils are not yet familiar with all the great religions of the world or the dynamic nature of the recent changes in the cultural and religious traditions of British society, which the school recognises and has identified as an area for further development. The effective safeguarding of pupils is at the heart of school provision. Pastoral care is excellent and provision for careers guidance and economic education are good. The leadership and management of the school are good. The head provides excellent leadership, identifying areas for improvement and pursuing these effectively. The head and other staff work well with the recently introduced campus administrators in monitoring and developing the school, and the trustees generally exercise effective oversight of the school, in conjunction with the campus administrators. Nevertheless, some confusion exists over the formal allocation of roles to staff, campus administrators and trustees, so that it is not entirely clear who is responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum, and the lines of accountability between the campus administrative team, the Board of Trustees and the Focus Learning Trust are blurred. The school meets all the independent school standards.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- raise the standard of all marking to the high level achieved by the best practice;
- clarify the formal roles and responsibilities of staff with regard to the management and implementation of the curriculum;
- clarify the formal roles and responsibilities of the campus administrative team in relation to the trustees and the Focus Learning Trust; and
- develop further pupils' understanding of the cultural values and beliefs of the principal groups that make up British society.

## **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). It was conducted by two independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations, and a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's organisation and governance.

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed a range of subject lessons and examined samples of pupils' work in all key stages. The school's curriculum documentation, policies and records were scrutinised. Interviews were held with a number of staff in key positions and the inspectors spoke to groups of pupils. They also took account of the questionnaires completed by pupils and parents before the inspection.

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Ted Cohn
Team inspectors:	Mr Andrew Redpath
Lay inspector:	Mr Philip Hutchinson

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:**

Focus School Plymouth Campus is co-educational non-selective independent school situated in St Budeaux, Plymouth in Devon and opened on its current site in September 2008 as a secondary school. Since then it has extended its age range so that it now caters for pupils from the ages of seven to eighteen. The school is owned and run by the Oakdene Education Trust, which is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and the school is registered with the Department for Education as a school of Special Religious Character. It provides education for children from families living in the areas of Plymouth, St Austell, Torbay and Exeter. The school currently has a hundred and ten pupils, including one pupil with a statement of special educational need. The school buildings were originally built as a maintained primary school and have been extensively refurbished and modified to meet their current use as a junior and secondary school.

In order to fulfil their potential, the school aims to develop pupils' integrity, care and compassion, respect for others and the law, self-discipline and the pursuit of excellence, whilst learning to think critically.

# **SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

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

All pupils make good progress in their learning, whatever their starting points, and very largely enjoy their learning. The special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCO) and learning support staff help to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistently good progress. Able, gifted and talented pupils do not receive such systematic support, but teachers are aware of their learning needs and generally ensure that learning tasks are sufficiently open-ended or include extension work to ensure that they are fully challenged. A key feature of pupils' good progress is their diligence, level of concentration and commitment to their learning and achievement. Speaking and listening skills are particularly well developed.

The achievement of pupils is good across the school and for the full range of ability. Standardised test scores indicate the great majority of pupils make at least the expected progress in national tests and examinations and many achieve better than this. GCSE results were above the national average last year. Results at A-level were in line with the national average, with a cohort that was broader in its ability range than is often found in those taking A-level examinations.

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

The curriculum is good and allows pupils of all abilities to make good progress in their learning. It follows the National Curriculum lower down the school, with a particular emphasis on linguistic and mathematical development, but allows all the required areas of educational experience to be covered satisfactorily. Higher up the school, in Key Stages 3 and 4, aesthetic and creative education and technology are given less attention, but the recent recruitment of food and design technology specialists is allowing the school to strengthen its curriculum provision in those areas.

The planning of the curriculum at Key Stages 2 and 3 draws heavily on Focus Learning Trust documentation, which provides well-organised and comprehensive coverage of what needs to be learnt, including how planning can meet the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are able, gifted and talented. This provides a helpful framework for teachers' long and medium-term planning.

Pupils take a largely common core of GCSE subjects at Key Stage 4, which provides a broad educational experience and includes a half GCSE course in citizenship and non-examination courses in cooking or woodwork. The latter courses are soon to be replaced by examination courses in design technology and food technology. Post-16 provision also has a very broad core including English, mathematics and business orientated courses, with direct links to employment opportunities for pupils. This provision is broadened significantly

through the use of video conferencing where several subjects are provided effectively through this medium.

Focus Learning Trust (FLT) wide initiatives, such as self-directed learning and 'the cognitive curriculum' - focusing on transferable skills - are beginning to influence the curricular experience and educational learning of pupils, but the lack of sufficient facilities for self-directed learning, particularly in the sixth form, has hindered progress. Increasingly pupils are starting tertiary vocational courses, which they enjoy and teachers encourage, in the sixth form as part of encouraging the concept of life-long learning.

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. It seldom falls below good and includes some outstanding practice. Teachers have a good command of their teaching material and enjoy teaching it, conveying this in a lively manner that engages pupils' interest and creates a purposeful atmosphere and classrooms. Instructions are clear, the quality of explanations is good and many teachers use questioning very well to check and consolidate understanding and explore issues further.

The great majority of lessons have clear learning objectives, which are pursued effectively through the teacher-led activities and learning tasks set. Lessons involve a variety of activities, often including small group work and the reporting back of findings to the whole class, which is done well.

Teachers have good and often excellent relationships with pupils, having a clear understanding of pupils' learning needs and prior attainment and using this information effectively in planning lessons. In this they are generally well supported by advice and guidance from the learning support department. Helpful information and guidance is provided for teachers about the difficulties that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities face and how these might be addressed, but this has not yet become an integral part of the review and development process for these pupils. Teachers generally cater effectively for pupils identified as able, gifted or talented.

Effective use is made of resources to support teaching and learning, including information and communications technology (ICT), where extra resources are extending and developing learning opportunities significantly. The learning environment is enhanced by the lively and interesting displays in many classrooms.

The school values greatly high standards of courtesy. This includes respect and tolerance of others' cultural and religious views and beliefs and respect for the law, all of which underpin pupils' work and accord closely with fundamental British values.

The marking of pupils' work is regular and constructive. It is often lively and includes suggestions for how pupils can improve their work, but less frequently does it include diagnostic marking or the setting of specific targets for pupils to focus on in order to improve their work. Nonetheless, some excellent examples

of marking were also observed. Marking is often supported by helpful verbal comments by teachers to the class. The school has an effective framework for assessment, drawing on cognitive tests and the assessment of pupils' achievement against the age-related expectations of cognitive tests. Progress in learning is tracked through half-termly assessments, which provide helpful evidence of progress that is appreciated by teachers, pupils and parents. This information facilitates early intervention where necessary to improve achievement and also celebrates good achievement by pupils.

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

The quality of pupils' personal development is good, with some outstanding features. British democratic values are encompassed in the fundamental values encapsulated in the school's ethos; integrity, care and compassion, respect for others and the law, self-discipline and the pursuit of excellence. From an early age pupils develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong and a strong moral code, which is reinforced by the community. Staff provide good models of behaviour for pupils, which they emulate, reflecting the high levels of trust and respect between staff and pupils. The pupils' behaviour is excellent and their self-esteem is developed well through the respect that teachers show them and they show each other, together with the recognition of academic achievement and acts of personal kindness and support that teachers' praise and the reward system reinforces, such as the bronze, silver and gold awards. Pastoral care is excellent.

Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) is delivered effectively through a combination of timetabled provision lower down the school, assemblies, tutorial time and external speakers. Citizenship is timetabled throughout Key Stage 3 and pupils study a half GCSE course in citizenship, giving them a well-developed understanding of the British political system. Current affairs lessons help to keep pupils in the sixth form well briefed about the world. Similarly, economic education is well developed through the various business and vocationally orientated courses taken in the sixth form; the personal finance course; the work experience programme and the business and enterprise activities supporting the raising of money for charities.

The school is effective in encouraging pupils to use their initiative and in allowing them to take responsibility. Some act as house captains, others help to supervise younger pupils at lunch-time and act as mentors for younger pupils. Pupils chair and run the school council, take the minutes themselves and manage an annual budget of £1500. A striking feature of their work is the way in which pupils not only raise issues, but also suggest solutions, for example, changing the drop-off point for buses in order to improve use of the playground. In the sixth form pupils take part in a residential leadership course, from which they learn much about leadership and teamwork. They also select local and national charities to support and discuss ways to raise funds for these charities.

Pupils develop some understanding of different cultures and faiths in the United Kingdom through assemblies and various subjects, such as the study of Islamic architecture in art or patterns of historical migration in primary topic work.

Nevertheless, pupils are not yet familiar with all the great religions of the world or the dynamic nature of the recent changes in the cultural and religious traditions of British society, which the school recognises and has identified as an area for further development.

Careers education and guidance are good and allow pupils to find out about a range of career options in the world of work where pupils and their parents want them to go when they leave school. Pupils have mentors from the local Brethren business communities who are themselves early into their careers and provide very helpful support and guidance for pupils in relation to their sixth form courses and the sort of skills they will need when they go into work. Increasing numbers of pupils are being encouraged to seek out tertiary level courses and begin them before they leave school, to emphasise the importance of lifelong learning. The guidance that pupils receive is highly pertinent to their chosen career paths. Nevertheless, careers education does not explore sufficiently the wider context of employment, such as the occupational structures and job opportunities within the Brethren community regionally and nationally.

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

The school's provision for welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good. The effective safeguarding of pupils is at the heart of the provision. The safeguarding policy follows closely national and FLT guidelines, which are detailed and comprehensive, whilst safeguarding procedures are clear and robust. Staff have had *Prevent* training and are alert to the dangers of radicalism and extremism, as are campus administrators and trustees. Teaching resources and the curriculum are also monitored closely for these dangers.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy have the appropriate higher-level training, whilst other staff have completed basic safeguarding training on how to recognise any signs giving rise to concern about pupils and to whom they should report them. The school has appropriate links with the local safeguarding board and local authority. The school promotes e-safety well, so that pupils understand the dangers and distress caused by the anti-social use of electronic equipment and how to keep themselves safe at school and at home, where the community exercises close oversight of the use of such equipment.

The school has effective policies to promote pupils' health and safety. It has a detailed anti-bullying policy and has an annual designated anti-bullying week. Pupils understand what bullying is and report that there is very little of it. On the odd occasion that it takes place, they report that the matter is resolved swiftly and effectively. Pupils say they feel very safe at the school.

Both the school and the community emphasise the importance of healthy living and aspects of this are discussed in various subjects, such as science, physical education, food technology, tutorial time and PSHEE. Healthy eating and the importance of regular exercise are two key themes.

Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for practical activities in school and for trips, visits and travel to and from home. All the requirements for fire safety

are met, including the provision and maintenance of the necessary equipment. Clear procedures in case of fire are displayed as they should be and regular fire drills indicate the speedy evacuation of the building.

The school's first aid policy is appropriate. Several staff have relevant in-date certificated training, and incidents are carefully recorded in the accident book, together with actions taken. The medical room more than meets requirements. Secure storage is provided for chemicals and other hazardous materials, whilst equipment used in design and food technology areas is clean and tidy, with guards where necessary.

The school has carried out all the necessary checks efficiently to ensure that staff, volunteers and trustees are suited to work with children and meet all the regulations fully in this regard.

The admissions and attendance registers are maintained correctly in accordance with the relevant regulations.

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

The leadership and management of the school is good overall and has been clearly successful in inculcating in pupils the school's ethos of integrity, care and compassion, respect for others and the law, self-discipline and the pursuit of excellence. The head provides excellent and empathetic leadership, identifying clearly areas for improvement and pursuing these effectively. The head, campus administrators and trustees have a good knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards and ensure that the school meets all the regulations. In this, they have been ably supported by the FLT. The head, staff, campus administration team and trustees place a high priority on ensuring the safeguarding and well-being of pupils in the school and have taken all the necessary steps to assure this. The head works closely with staff to improve various aspects of the school and also, with the support of other staff, monitors the quality of teaching and learning closely. Performance management is well-established and is making an effective contribution to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and identifying staff development needs. Similarly, the tracking system is well managed and allows a close monitoring of pupils' performance. There remains some confusion about the extent of the head's role vis-a-vis that of the FLT in determining and implementing the curriculum.

The head and other relevant staff work closely with campus administrators in providing the effective monitoring and oversight of provision and keep trustees well-informed about developments. Usual practice had been that the head did not attend trustees' meetings and only made written reports to trustees. This arrangement was altered just before the inspection, so that the head can attend trustees meetings in order to report on school provision and developments and answer questions from trustees directly; a helpful move in improving communication between the head and the trustees.

The school has produced a good school improvement plan, with clear and appropriate objectives and the actions to be taken to achieve them within

appropriate time frames. The school has managed the long-term absence of two key members of staff well, reducing the adverse effects on provision in the school.

The premises and accommodation are in good order and support teaching and learning well in most respects, although the FLT's self-directed learning initiative in the secondary part of the school, and particularly in the sixth form, has been hindered by the lack of space to develop a self-directed learning centre. All physical education and games take place off site at well-equipped sports and leisure centres. Parents are kept well informed about the personal development and achievement of their children. They express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of their children's education. The school has a comprehensive and thorough complaints policy; there have been no formal complaints in the last 12 months.

### **Governance**

The quality and effectiveness of governance is good overall. The trustees are well aware of their responsibilities and have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have recently devolved much of the day-to-day responsibility for the monitoring and oversight of the running of the school to the newly appointed campus administrative team, an initiative supported by the FLT. The campus administrative team, well-led by a former trustee, has established excellent working relationships with the head and staff and provides highly effective support to the school. It also reports to the trustees regularly on the work of the team, so that they can retain effective oversight of school provision. This arrangement is working well on a day-to-day basis. The school continues to function well and trustees continue to have effective oversight of provision. Nevertheless, some issues have arisen that require resolution. These include the clarification of formal roles and responsibilities, such as the head's and trustees' responsibility for determining and implementing the curriculum vis-a-vis that of the FLT and the formalisation of the roles and responsibilities of campus administrators in relation to the board of trustees and the FLT.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School Plymouth Campus			
Address of school:	Foulston Avenue Plymouth PL5 1HL			
Telephone number:	01752 363290			
Email address:	plymouthcampus@focus-school.com			
Web address	www.Plymouthfocus-school.com			
Proprietor:	Oakdene Education Trust			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Mr Howard Melvin			
Head Teacher:	Mr Mark P Kerridge			
Early Years Manager	N/A			
DfE Number	879/6010			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	Up to £2,500			
Age range of pupils	7-18			
Gender of pupils	Mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	110	part-time	None
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	56	Girls:	40
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	5	Girls:	9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	1	Girls:	None
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	None	Girls:	None
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).**