



## **SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE**

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

**DfE No: 356/6030**

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

<b>The quality of education</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</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>outstanding</b>	<b>1</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: 7-9 March 2017**

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

Focus School Stockport Campus provides an outstanding quality of education. All students achieve exceptionally well and make excellent progress in their personal development. Educational attainment is high, particularly at GCSE, and the school adds outstanding value to the students' achievements. There are major strengths in assessment and the use of assessment data to track students' performance and set challenging targets for them, which has a decisive impact on their progress. Teaching is of a consistently high quality and, together with self-directed learning activities, ensures that students of all abilities are fully challenged. The provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. The teaching assistants make a significant contribution to students' progress and understanding. Students have very good literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening skills but in some cases presentation is careless and handwriting untidy. The students' behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate professional attitudes to learning and take increasing responsibility for the organisation of aspects of school life such as assemblies and 'Super Learning Days'. The leadership of the school is visionary, innovative and passionate about driving up standards and boosting students' self-esteem. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made to attainment, teaching and learning. Attendance is well above the national average. Students say they love coming to school and are enthusiastic about what they can contribute to it. They gain a good understanding of British values from the various elements of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) in the school but these are not well coordinated to ensure even coverage of topics for all students. The systems for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding and extensive training has encouraged vigilance. The school receives strong support and challenge from the Trustees and team of Campus Administrators. All of the independent school standards are met.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- Improve the students' handwriting and presentation of their work so that it matches the quality of their learning; and
- Improve the coordination of the PSHEE programme across the school in order to ensure that all students have had access to all its various components.

## **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 teaching and learning in nineteen lessons throughout the school, including discussion with students in self-directed learning sessions. They examined students' work. They spoke to students from all parts of the school, attended their committee meetings and observed them during break times. The inspectors also held discussions with members of staff and trustees about their roles and responsibilities in the school. They examined the school's documentation, records and its website. The inspectors took account of the views expressed by students and parents in their responses to questionnaires.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Jane Cooper
Team inspectors:	Mr Martin Cragg

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

Focus School Stockport Campus is an independent day school for girls and boys aged seven to eighteen in Stockport, Cheshire. It is registered with the Department for Education as a school of special religious character and is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust (FLT). A Christian ethos, based on the teaching of the Holy Bible, underpins all aspects of school life. The school was established on its current site in 2008 in purpose-built accommodation, which has been further developed since. There are currently 156 full-time students on roll with equal numbers of boys and girls. There are 43 students in key stage 2 and 28 in the sixth form. Four students have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or statement and another eight have been identified as being in need of extra support because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No students have English as an additional language. The school has identified 33 students as being able, gifted and talented. The students come from Brethren communities in Manchester, Liverpool, Chester and Crewe.

The school aims to encourage students to develop their full potential and acquire the discipline of learning how to learn, while upholding Christian teachings and beliefs. It has recently achieved recognition as a world class school.

# **SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

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

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

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

The school's most recent public examination results for 2016 show exceptional performance at GCSE. Students' attainment is high in almost all indicators including the Attainment 8 score, where the proportion of students achieving five or more grades A\* to C including English and mathematics and the percentage achieving at least a grade C in both English and mathematics was 100%. This was an improvement on the already high results of 2015. The progress of Year 11 students including those with SEND was exceptional, with the value added score, progress 8 score and rates of progress in English and mathematics all well above the national average. Students in Year 6 reached the national standard in reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling tests but were below the standard in mathematics. However, after adjustments to the teaching programme, the current Year 6 students, including the higher attaining and those with SEND, are making significant progress and are on course to exceed the national standard. The small number of Year 13 students last year all achieved grades C or D in their A level courses. Standards have risen appreciably in the current cohort, where in AS examinations last year over half of all grades were either at A or B.

All students, irrespective of age, ability or starting point, learn exceptionally well and make excellent progress. They are self-motivated, determined and enthusiastic learners who make a significant contribution to their own success and that of their school. Collaborative work in self-directed learning (SDL) helps them to develop their powers of critical analysis and excellent research skills. They know how to think and learn for themselves, organise tasks effectively, set targets, analyse data, and plan and meet deadlines. They demonstrate great maturity in discussion by listening respectfully to others and by influencing and persuading them of their views. They are effective public speakers and have good experience of speaking in school assemblies and committees. The students develop excellent literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school and their use of information and communication technology (ICT) is strong. However, it is noticeable that handwriting is variable across the school and that the presentation of some students' work does not match their enthusiasm for learning, particularly where teachers do not insist on high standards of finished work.

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

The quality of the teaching and assessment is outstanding and has a decisive impact on the students' excellent progress. Assessment is a major strength of the school. Teachers implement the school's marking policy consistently so that every student's work is marked regularly and they receive high quality feedback on what they did well and how they can improve. Assessment information is collected and monitored on a frequent and regular basis and used effectively to set challenging targets, track students' performance and check trends. Senior leaders are quick to celebrate students' achievements and to identify any underperformance so that a personalised intervention plan can be put in place to

help those in difficulty. This highly effective process is driving up standards, accelerating progress and boosting students' confidence and self-esteem.

Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively and both make a significant contribution to students' progress. The quality of the teaching is consistently good and some outstanding teaching was observed in a variety of subjects throughout the school. Key features of the excellent teaching are thorough planning with differentiated tasks to challenge and support students of all abilities; brisk pace; clear explanations; and demanding questioning techniques. Students are set open-ended tasks which challenge them to use their initiative. Teachers provide them with helpful prompts and guidance to take them onto the next level, but the students are expected to research topics for themselves. For example, some Year 11 food technology students had researched the nutritional needs of pregnant women for whom they were going to plan and cook a suitable meal. Expectations are high, even of the youngest students who were using tools safely in textiles and design technology (DT). The skills and knowledge which students learn in one subject are reinforced seamlessly in others, as demonstrated in a Year 6 science lesson by the way in which the teacher encouraged students to consider the appropriate style of language to use for writing up an experiment. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and the increasing use of specialist teaching in key stage 2 is having a beneficial impact on students' acquisition and use of technical vocabulary and understanding of key concepts. Tasks are relevant, engage the students' interest and make learning fun. A 'take-away menu' of homework tasks in science gave students freedom of choice while reinforcing the material covered in class. The school has a highly committed team of staff which is enriched by the presence of students on initial teacher training (ITT) practice from local universities and there is much sharing of good practice.

The school has excellent systems for identifying students' special educational needs and disabilities, based on regular review of their progress, and provides targeted support to address them. In-class support for these students is highly effective in meeting their complex needs and enabling them to participate fully in lessons. This was evident in an excellent Year 11 English lesson where students with SEND made relevant and interesting oral contributions to a discussion of World War 1 poetry. The school also identifies able, gifted and talented students and ensures, often through SDL, that these students tackle extended or complex problems and present their findings to others. Whatever their abilities and starting points, all students make excellent progress.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced across all age ranges and meets the needs of all students. The primary curriculum is broad and well-planned. Increasing use of specialist teaching for younger students aids their transition through to secondary, so that the whole school feels seamless and well-integrated. GCSE courses start in Year 9 and students maintain a broad range of subjects with choices in technology, business and enterprise. The sixth form curriculum has developed considerably in the last two years and students select from over thirty courses, taught either in school or through video conferencing links. Some individual programmes including chemistry and law have been offered successfully to match students' interests and aspirations. Courses are very well

planned and enable students to make excellent progress. SDL is an influential aspect of students' rapidly improving independence and confidence. The curriculum is extended by additional events, such as the themed 'Super Learning Days' which students plan and run themselves. Extra-curricular activities, such as the mountain walk challenge, and charity and community projects develop their self-confidence, interpersonal skills and understanding of other sections of the local and wider community. The various choirs, all of exceptional quality, have raised significant amounts of money for charity and give students challenging opportunities to perform and develop their aesthetic and expressive skills.

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

Students' personal development is outstanding. The considerable contribution of students to the school and community, their excellent personal qualities and remarkable charitable work testify to their politeness, care and respect for, and tolerance of others. The school is a tightly knit and very positive community. Students understand right and wrong, behave impeccably in lessons and around the school, and are sensitive to the needs of others. They give of their time and effort tirelessly and organise an impressive range of activities and events to raise money for a wide range of local and national groups. They take on leadership roles willingly and have significant input to the running of the school through four standing committees and the House structure. The Wellbeing committee considered a detailed proposal to begin research into reducing the carbon footprint of the school. Students' attendance is excellent, and is well above that found nationally.

The school has implemented a wide range of approaches to promote and reward students' development of personal and learning skills. There is a sophisticated array of awards and rewards, supported by the Trustees, which motivate students and recognise their achievements. In combination with the changes to the curriculum, students have become engaged and interested learners who thrive on responsibility and rise to challenge. They bring a strong sense of spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding to their learning as seen in a thought-provoking discussion of faith in an English lesson and through the students' reaction to the details of strategies used in the Vietnam War. Students enjoy performing in the choir, competing in sports and using their creative talents.

The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme is comprehensive in the lower part of the school. The GCSE citizenship course will be implemented for all key stage 4 students next year, but currently various aspects of PSHEE are taught to older students through subjects, assemblies and Super Learning Days and the co-ordination of the programme is underdeveloped. Notwithstanding, the school provides students with a broad understanding of British values and key aspects of life in modern Britain which enhance their tolerance, respect and community spirit.

The Careers Advantage Programme in Year 11 and the sixth form ensures that students are very well informed about career opportunities, develop CV and interview techniques and are linked with a relevant business, often leading to further study and, in some cases, permanent employment. The developments

the school has made have enhanced students' self-awareness and determination to make the most of their education and to extend and improve their skills.

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

The school's arrangements for safeguarding students' welfare health and safety are outstanding and meet the required standards. The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are well-trained senior staff who have built effective working links with external partners to engage support for those who need it. Child protection records are thorough, well organised and held in an appropriate manner. The DSLs have ensured that all members of staff and volunteers have received thorough training in safeguarding so that they are vigilant, understand their duty to protect children and are fully conversant with the school's procedures. Recent training has included identifying the most important risk factors for students' safety. There is a strong culture of vigilance and a lack of complacency. Students are alert to the school's systems for keeping them safe both physically and online. Older students organised and presented a recent school assembly on online safety and cyber-bullying. Senior leaders have been trained in safer recruitment. The school's procedures for recruiting and vetting staff adhere to these principles and can be demonstrated through the records of recent appointments. The single central register is an up to date record of the statutory checks that have been conducted on all those who have contact with students.

Students have a very thorough understanding of what constitutes bullying. They know how to report any concern and trust that adults will take any report seriously and deal with incidents promptly and effectively. Pupils and their parents are confident that the school is a safe place and students said in interviews that bullying was rare. The school actively promotes healthy living; sport is popular, food technology is a thriving option and healthy eating has been the focus of a Super Learning Day leading to the Healthy Schools Award. Students have heard from workers at a mental health charity as part of the assembly programme.

The provision for securing students' health and safety is very effective. All health and safety policies and processes are in place, including risk assessments and regular fire safety checks. First aid arrangements are effective and accident records are rigorous. The Trustees make regular safety inspections of the school and, through risk assessments, have addressed the safety and security of the site, for example by enhancing the fire alarm system. The premises and accommodation are well maintained and specialist teaching facilities, including a well-appointed science laboratory, food technology room and the SDL centre contribute positively to the students' education and achievement.

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

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The school is ably led by the headteacher who enjoys strong support from the Trustees, senior leadership team and staff. He has a clear vision for excellence in all aspects of the school's performance, and his ambition and uncompromising determination drive forward the school's process of continual improvement. The students'

achievements, well-being and happiness are central to all school plans and developments. The work of the school strongly supports its Christian ethos.

The impact of the strong and determined leadership can be demonstrated in some outstanding improvements since the last inspection. Students' attendance has risen impressively from well below the national average to well above it and illustrates the students' enjoyment of learning and their desire to be in school. The outstanding use of data now ensures that all students make excellent and sustained progress and are helped to reach their full potential. Senior leaders have developed a committed team of staff with a shared ambition for the school and a common understanding of the importance of their role within it. Accountability for students' success is an important feature of the strong appraisal and performance management system. The school facilitates excellent continued professional development which links the identified needs of the individual to those of the school.

The school improvement plan is set out under the key areas of the school's work and incorporates the FLT's One School priorities. It is an ambitious plan which gives structure and direction to the school's work and indicates that senior leaders have an accurate assessment of its strengths and priorities for development. Within the extensive range of exciting initiatives, however, there is also room in the plan for ensuring that the school keeps a systematic check on more routine matters. Administrators play an important role in the smooth running of the school and there is an attractive and interesting website.

The school is strongly supported by parents and liaises closely with them, supplying both statutory information and regular reports on their children's progress, attitude and achievement. Parents' views of the school were overwhelmingly positive. The school operates effectively its complaints policy which meets the required standard.

## **Governance**

The quality of governance is outstanding. The Trustees and Campus Administrators are very actively involved with the school and share the headteacher's vision. They hold regular minuted meetings with individuals taking on responsibilities for aspects of governance of the school, such as finance and safeguarding. The Trustees are highly effective in holding school leaders to account for their work and provide excellent challenge and support to the school. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Stockport Campus			
Address of school:	237 Didsbury Heaton-Norris Stockport SK4 2AA			
Telephone number:	0161 975 9323			
Email address:	<a href="mailto:stockportcampus@focus-school.com">stockportcampus@focus-school.com</a>			
Web address	<a href="http://stockport.focus-school.com/">http://stockport.focus-school.com/</a>			
Proprietor:	Mereside Education Trust			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Mr Calvin Devenish			
Head Teacher:	Mr Larry Wilson			
DfE Number	3566030			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	Fees are charged internally			
Age range of pupils	7-18			
Gender of pupils	Boys and girls			
Total number on roll	full-time	156	part-time	0
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	64	Girls:	64
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	14	Girls:	14
Number of pupils with EHCP/statements of special educational need	Boys:	2	Girls:	2
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).**