



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL BIGGLESWADE CAMPUS SCHOOL

DfE No: 823/6000

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

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

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: 6 - 8 March 2018

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Focus Biggleswade School Campus meets all of the independent school standards and continues to provide an outstanding quality of education. There is a strong focus on improving progress and achievement through encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and the school does this very well. All students make excellent progress and achieve well from their different starting points. Public examination results at GCSE and A level are well above the national average. Standards are high at all levels and the school adds significant value to students' education at every key stage. Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Teachers are skilled in ensuring the innovative approaches to curriculum delivery and self-directed learning (SDL) meet students' needs. Staff, especially those who are new to the school, are sometimes dealing with simultaneous innovations and occasionally need time to reflect and handle the required technology and software. The excellent support given to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective and helps them to make progress which is as good as, and in some cases, better than their peers. Students who are more able are also challenged appropriately and are able to move their own learning onto higher levels. Continuous, on-going assessment that both judges progress and informs next steps in learning is at the heart of teaching and learning in the school. The outstanding curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to students' interests. Resources are excellent and widen opportunities for students to study courses that would not be otherwise available. The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students behave very well and show a good understanding of the importance of respect and tolerance in British society. The school promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils exceptionally well, and has robust procedures for recruiting and checking on the suitability of staff. The leadership, management and governance of the school are outstanding. They are highly effective in developing the quality of education by making sure students attain the highest standards they can through the best possible educational experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- carefully monitor the impact of innovation and rapid change on staff to ensure they are given time to reflect on the significance of these changes to their everyday classroom practice.

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 a range of subjects throughout the school. Inspectors spent time in the Learning Centre as well as observing class based sessions. They looked at the school's website, documentation and records. They spoke to groups of students, staff and trustees and took account of parent's and students' views through their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Dr Christine Jones
Team inspectors:	Mr Michael Thirkell

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Focus School Biggleswade Campus is a non-selective independent day school for boys and girls aged between seven and eighteen years. It is owned by Wellgrove Education Trust and supported by the Focus Learning Trust. It is an independent charity being registered with the Department for Education (DfE) as a school with a special religious character. The school is situated in a semi-rural location on the outskirts of Biggleswade in Bedfordshire. The school aims to create 'a stimulating environment for students to work in so that they may emerge as well-rounded, self-disciplined, independent learners ready for the world of work'. The school admits children from Plymouth Brethren families in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Middlesex and Barnet who mainly travel to school by minibus.

There are currently 146 students on roll, including 24 in the sixth form. One student has an educational health care (EHC) plan. The school has identified a further 38 students with a special education need and/or disability (SEND) but not in receipt of an EHC plan. 32 students are identified as being able, gifted or talented (AGT). There are no students who have English as an additional language (EAL).

The school was last inspected by SIS in March 2015. At that time the school met all the independent school standards.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is outstanding.

Students' learning and achievement

Students' learning and achievement are outstanding. They make substantial and sustained progress from their different starting points as they move through the school. At the end of Key Stage 4 GCSE standards are above average when compared to national outcomes. Standards are also high in Year 13 and students achieve well in the different courses available.

In Key Stage 2 students make excellent progress from Key Stage 1 and reach high standards in literacy and numeracy that are above national averages. The youngest students develop excellent learning skills alongside skills for analysing their own work to identify what they need to do to improve and make even faster progress. This rate of progress is maintained as students move into Key Stage 3. They become more skilled in using the innovative self-directed learning (SDL) techniques to organise their own learning as they work in the learning centre as well as in other lessons. Outcomes for GCSE students are outstanding with almost half gaining the highest GCSE grades. Students with SEND make excellent progress that is, in some cases, better than their peers due to the excellent support they receive. Students who are more able do particularly well as they can use the SDL techniques to extend their own learning to higher levels. Students in the sixth form also perform at a high level and enjoy their learning. Their mature approach to their studies means they are taking responsibility for their own learning and this adds considerable quality to their assignments.

Students are confident learners who are self-motivated problem solvers and independent thinkers. The school creates a very effective environment for them to be able to succeed with this approach to learning. They are able to work well on both on their own and with others seeking out new information which they then use to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. These skills are developed and consolidated as the students move through the school until, in the sixth form, students can work in connected groups with similar students from other schools across the country.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding and underpins the excellent progress made by the students. Lesson planning is thorough and covers all aspects of content and skill development within the context of SDL. Continuous, on-going assessment that both judges progress and informs next steps in learning is at the heart of teaching and learning in the school. Detailed individual lesson planning ensures that SDL facilities are used creatively in a way that ensures all students have appropriate opportunities over time to work in a variety of contexts both individually and with others. This is supported by information technology (IT) resources that allow students to work with those in other schools. Innovation proceeds at a rapid pace and sometimes teachers,

especially those who are new to the school, find it difficult to manage resources such as IT alongside other innovations. Lessons progress at a brisk pace, even where the students are all working together in the learning centre. Transitions between lessons are very smooth and efficient whether students are changing rooms or remaining in the learning centre.

Teachers have high expectations of their students and always expect high quality work. Students rise to this challenge and their work folders contain impressive amounts of outstanding work. Presentation of this work is excellent. Most teachers are excellent managers and organisers of the different learning strategies and they monitor rigorously where every student is on the programme of work and the progress they are making. This benefits all students but particularly those with SEND as they can receive targeted support that is designed to meet their individual needs.

Assessment is integrated into teaching and lesson planning and forms the basis of learning. Clear success criteria are well understood by the students and they use them to judge the success of their work as well as planning future work. Students are encouraged to critique their own work and that of their peers and to focus on improving quality. This is very effective where tasks are open-ended, or assignment based as students gain a lot from working together. Careful regular and rigorous marking, along with consistent verbal feedback has a significant impact on improving learning as students are given excellent guidance on how to improve their work. Detailed records are kept of student performance and these are used to track progress, support students and set future targets. Staff are also skilled in using information on performance to judge the overall school performance.

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding. The school has adopted the curriculum framework developed by Focus Learning Trust and OneSchool UK. The overarching intention is that every student can realise their potential through following a personalised and challenging curriculum. The curriculum is assignment based as this meets the schools' ambition of developing the students as self-directed learners. Considerable emphasis is placed on ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of students of all abilities and allows for creative thinking. It is broad and balanced, integrating content along with skill based training giving students excellent opportunities to develop their SDL strategies. The curriculum for the youngest students is well planned to develop the research skills they will need in later years as well as helping them to make the transition from other schools. Planning for the use of SDL in curriculum delivery is enhanced by the use of virtual learning and an on-line platform. This platform enables the students to design and work through their own learning programme which covers all aspects of the particular curriculum topic they are studying. This also ensures students with SEND to receive focused support dedicated to their needs and ensure the curriculum is fully available to them. In the SDL sessions students are faced with challenging tasks that are interesting and engaging. Class based sessions are then used flexibly to cover areas that the teacher identifies as needing further input to ensure full curriculum coverage. While the basic curriculum is mainly planned around students completing assignments, this approach has been

amended to increase the variety of curriculum delivery strategies. Students now spend half their time learning independently and half learning in more traditional contexts (called a 50 / 50 approach). Students said they appreciate this variety. All students progress to the sixth form and many continue to study mathematics and English. The curriculum here is again designed to meet individual levels of ability. A range of A level studies and vocational courses are provided to meet differing interests and needs and are delivered through personalised programmes. The number of sixth form courses available to students is extended through the use of virtual learning and on-line sharing. This allows individual students to link up with students in other schools and study courses such as law that would not be economically viable otherwise.

Students are encouraged to become involved in activities that extend the curriculum. For example, Year 8 students participate in a very successful 'Dragon's den' programme that develops a range of attributes particularly leadership and business skills. A lunch time chess club is very popular and the school orchestra meets after school one night a week.

2. THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of students' personal development is outstanding. Students are well behaved, polite and enjoy the strong sense of community in the school. They have a clear sense of right and wrong that guides their behaviour, creating a positive learning environment that supports mutual respect and good relationships between students and with staff. The high quality personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme is well planned and resourced. Through this programme students gain an excellent understanding of British values in modern British society. This PSHEE programme, along with excellent curriculum planning in other subjects, helps students to gain a clear understanding of how society functions and their responsibilities within it. They appreciate the multi-faith and multi-cultural nature of society and know how they can contribute to it. Students learn about the origins of democracy and can debate a balanced view of the implications of this in their lives. This is reinforced by excellent displays around the school that are designed to challenge and stimulate their thinking.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Provision is tightly audited to ensure the depth of coverage is appropriate. It ensures they are equipped to be thoughtful, tolerant and respectful of other beliefs, cultures, views and lifestyles. The students have strong moral values and show respect for themselves and others both in school and the wider community. They readily accept responsibility for planning events in school and are keen to express their views as they know they will be listened to by the staff. The sixth form student leadership team is elected to their posts by all the students in the school. They represent the students in meetings both with the staff and with the trustees where they discuss their ideas for improving the school. They have received safeguarding training and regularly help in tutor groups and mentor younger students. This harmonious school community provides an excellent setting for social development. Students make a considerable contribution to school life and to the wider community. They support different charities such as

the Sepsis Trust and a local food bank, raising significant funds. They have a secure understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences which shape modern Britain and have a good knowledge of Parliamentary democracy and current issues.

Careers advice is excellent. Students are given quality advice and guidance through the Career Advantage Programme (CAP). This is excellent preparation for life beyond school as work-place focused courses run alongside more academic studies and allow for a professional analysis of each students' possible post-school aptitudes and needs. They leave school well-prepared for joining the world of work.

3. SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school's provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All members of staff are well trained, and this training is updated regularly ensuring that staff are aware of the importance of keeping the students safe. Everyone in the school knows what to do if they have concerns about students' welfare and this ensures that issues raised by parents or staff are addressed promptly. This includes early stage intervention where a student has been identified as needing extra support with emotional issues. The school has set up a well-being room that students can access as needed. This approach to well-being adds considerable value to the already excellent care the school takes of students' welfare, health and safety.

The single central record contains all the required information in a detailed and clear format. It provides a thorough record of the school's meticulous and robust recruitment and checking procedures. Members of staff have been trained as appropriate in safer recruitment procedures. The trustee with responsibility for safeguarding regularly checks all procedures as well as the single central record and maintains detailed records of these checks.

Students live in several different local authorities and the school maintains good contacts with external agencies linked to those authorities. Staff are also well trained to deal with the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare. Students are very aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and have full confidence that staff will deal with any concerns appropriately. They know who to speak to if they have any issues and are taught how to stay safe online. Students say they feel very safe in school and have good relationships with staff and with each other. Beacon awards introduced by the school to acknowledge those students who show exceptional high standards of behaviour and are good role models for their peers have been very effective in promoting good behaviour and care for others. The Beacon students are held in high regard by other students.

Students are well supervised both in school and on any off-site activities with due care and attention being given to their welfare, health and safety. The status of every adult in the school is made clear to the students by the use of different

coloured lanyards. Admissions and attendance registers are well kept. Attendance is high with no unauthorised absence recorded.

All regulations related to health and safety are met in full. Risk assessments are thorough and carried out both for on-site activities and external school visits. Fire drills are carried out regularly and recorded appropriately as are the checks on fire safety equipment. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding, first aid, fire prevention and health and safety. The school site is very secure and maintained in excellent condition providing a safe and secure learning environment.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Leadership and management of the school are highly effective and provide a clear vision for future development. Improvement planning is based on thorough monitoring and evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It focuses on improvements that impact on raising students' outcomes and clearly identifies how these will be delivered. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it is having an impact. A summary of the plan is shared with staff, parents and students so that everyone is aware of the priorities. The student leadership team are given the full plan, they analyse it and produce their own version which gives them a strong sense of participation in decision making in the life of the school. Staff performance management is well embedded and leads to professional development that encourages, challenges and supports. As a result, teaching is highly effective, and this supports the students' outstanding progress.

The senior team consisting of the head teacher, deputy head teacher and the learning support coordinator are firmly committed to ensuring teaching is lively and active through keeping up to date with innovations that might support better learning. Initiatives such as SDL are well embedded, effective and supported by other strategies such as Growth Mindset. This teaching philosophy encourages resilience in learning and has underpinned the excellent development of students as independent learners. Some other innovations are not as successful due to the learning time for staff, especially new teachers, being quite short. Staff do not always have enough time and space to get to grips with these new strategies and embed them in to their teaching practices.

Relationships with the parents are very good. Parents are always welcome in the school and are kept well-informed through the excellent regular newsletters. They receive high quality reports in line with statutory requirements and they clearly show what each student has achieved and what they need to do to improve. The reports reflect the overall high quality of assessment in the school. Should any complaints arise they are dealt with appropriately through the complaints procedure that is in line with requirements.

The excellent school buildings are only four years old and were purpose remodelled to support the learning approaches of the school. Accommodation throughout the school is excellent, well maintained and designed to meet the specific way the curriculum is delivered. Resources are also excellent especially the popular learning centre. This area is much appreciated by the students and

they feel it is the centre of both the learning life as well as the social life of the school. When asked to suggest improvements, every student said they would like the learning centre to be enlarged.

Governance

Governance of the school is outstanding. The trustees demonstrate a deep commitment to the well-being of the school. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and obligations. They are fully aware of the statutory requirements for independent schools and are always checking these are met. They ensure the school has the resources it needs through prudent financial management that always strives to improve the facilities for the students. They are well trained for their roles and their job descriptions clearly define individual responsibilities. Relationships between the senior leadership team and trustees are very positive and mutually supportive. Regular face to face meetings greatly contribute to these relationships. Trustees also have good contact with students. The relevant trustees meet the student leadership team regularly and work with them on issues the students would like to address. For example, the current emphasis on healthy living and fitness training comes from these meetings.

The role of the regional principal has added a positive dimension to management through monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and making suggestions for improvement. This complements the school's own evaluation and suggestions for improvement are taken very seriously and acted upon.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School – Biggleswade campus			
Address of school:	The Oaks, Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 0EP			
Telephone number:	01767 602800			
Email address:	biggleswadecampus@focus-school.com			
Web address	www.biggleswade.focus-school.com			
Proprietor:	Wellgrove Education trust			
Chair of Trustees/Chair of Governors:	Mr Alex Harvey			
Head Teacher:	Mrs Catherine Glasman			
DfE Number	823/6000			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	charged internally			
Age range of students	7-18			
Gender of students	Mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	146	part-time	0
Number of compulsory school age students	Boys:	52	Girls:	70
Number of post-compulsory students	Boys:	8	Girls:	16
Number of students with statements of special educational need	Boys:	0	Girls:	1
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.