



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR FOCUS SCHOOL NORTHAMPTON PRIMARY CAMPUS

DfE No: 928/6072

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	good	2
Pupils' personal development	good	2
Safeguarding pupils' 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: 7 – 9 December 2015

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Focus School Northampton Primary Campus provides a good quality of education where pupils achieve well and make good continuous progress. The school fulfils its ethos, aims and vision. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 over half are reaching above the age-expected levels in reading, and mathematics. In most other subjects progress is at least as would be expected for their age. There are some talented musicians, mathematicians, artists and performers. In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils know how to use various programs but are not adept at using computers for research and investigation in all subjects. There are not always enough opportunities to write at length in all subjects. The curriculum is well suited to pupils' needs and covers all statutory requirements. There are good opportunities for extra-curricular activities which provide all pupils with a rounded education. Pupils' personal development is good. They are polite, attentive, highly motivated and form strong relationships with their peers and staff. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have a strong moral compass and talk confidently and coherently about their likes and dislikes. Pupils know, in basic terms, about other cultures but do not have a full in-depth of understanding of other beliefs, traditions and lifestyles in wider British society. Teaching is good overall and there are some examples of outstanding teaching. Lessons are planned well using a common framework. The teaching methods used engage and interest pupils. Assessment is effective and helps pupils move forward. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for organising their own work, but they do not always have sufficient opportunities to take charge of their own learning through independent tasks, research and investigation. Safeguarding procedures are administered and documented extremely well ensuring that everybody is safe and secure. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The recently altered line management systems are having a very positive effect on the quality of the school's provision and ultimately on pupils' achievement. This is evident in the good improvement that has been made since the last inspection and the increased progress made by pupils especially over the last year. Trustees and managers have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- strengthen the work in subjects other than English to include more opportunities for writing, particularly for higher-attainers to write at length, and enable all pupils to use electronic media more widely for research, enquiry and investigation; and
- help pupils to be better informed about the wide and diverse nature of cultures, beliefs and traditions in the United Kingdom.

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 a number of lessons in all three classes, observed groups working with support assistants and looked at a range of pupils' work across subjects. They interviewed the Campus Coordinator and the Head of the combined Northampton and Dunstable campuses. They also interviewed and sought the views of trustees, primary managers, teachers, administrators, parents and pupils. They scrutinised many school documents including the school's self-evaluation tool (SET) and school improvement plans, assessment data, various policies, procedures and schemes of work. They also looked at the safe use of the school buses used to take pupils to and from school.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr David Collard
Team inspector:	Mr Paul Armitage
Lay inspector:	Mr Michael Thomas

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school was opened in September 2008 in order to provide education for junior age Brethren children from a broad catchment area. About half of the pupils travel in from the west of the county. About a quarter of the pupils live in the Rushden area, and the remainder live in Northampton.

The team is led by a full-time Campus Coordinator, who also teaches Year 6 part-time. There is one other full-time teacher, who teaches Year 5 for the core subjects and science throughout the school. A part-time teacher (0.6) teaches the mixed Year 3/4 class in the core curriculum. Some areas, for example some numeracy and Art/DT, are taught by one or both of the two full-time Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA), who work in collaboration with class teachers. There is a part-time teaching assistant (0.6) from a supply agency. The school transport is driven by volunteer drivers, and lunchtime supervision is carried out by parents and relatives of the pupils.

Since the last inspection a new Headteacher has been appointed at the Dunstable Campus who is Head of the combined Northampton and Dunstable campuses. He has line management responsibility for the Campus Co-ordinator at Northampton campus and visits the pupils and staff regularly.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good, providing a well-balanced programme of subjects and activities. It is further enhanced by a range of extra-curricular clubs and visits. The school is aware that being small there could be difficulties providing a sufficiently broad range of subject teaching but has been innovative in curriculum development, for example its use of specialists. Expertise from the Dunstable campus has been used effectively to provide French, physical education and music lessons.

The curriculum is well planned using the Focus Learning Trust syllabus which is translated well into weekly and daily lessons. In the mixed age Year 3/4 class topics are run efficiently on a two year plan which ensures there is continuity and progression as pupils move through the school. In Year 6, pupils are expected to be more independent and are expected to use their initiative and imagination. As a result of the wide curricular opportunities, pupils are highly interested in their learning and are excited to learn more. Teachers use this excitement and motivation well to promote achievement across subjects and themes. For instance, in a science lesson on electrical circuits, pupils were encouraged to find out for themselves whether they could make a light or buzzer work. The teacher followed the schemes closely to ensure that time was given, not only to experiment, but also to discuss and record their findings. All pupils worked hard to accomplish all that had been set. The school rightly recognises that, while there are opportunities to learn the skills of information technology (IT) there are not enough opportunities to use various media to help them in all subjects such as through research and investigation.

The provision for those with special educational needs is good. These pupils are provided with extra support for literacy and numeracy which is enabling most to achieve their age expected levels by the time they leave in Year 6. The curriculum is adapted well to their needs to allow them to practise newly acquired skills. Pupils with particular talents are identified and encouraged to use these talents such as a music group who are presently practising for a school performance. This group includes a competent piano player, a drummer and singers. The school is now working to provide more opportunities with support provided at the Dunstable campus.

The curriculum provides for pupils to have a good basic understanding of British values including moral and social issues. There are fewer opportunities for them to develop an awareness of the rich and diverse nature of society within the UK.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. All lessons provide challenge, interest and high expectations. Pupils' work confirms that this is the norm. The minority of outstanding lessons were characterised by consistently high expectations combined with a chance for pupils to think hard for themselves about what they were learning. An example was seen in a Year 6 mathematics fractions lesson

where the extension task was to see what would happen if pupils walked half way across the playground, then half again and so on. One higher attaining pupil came to the conclusion that you would never reach the end because the top and bottom number would never be the same. This high level of challenge does not always happen in other lessons. Consequently, higher attaining pupils are not always provided with this extra challenge that will fully develop their higher-order thinking skills and independent learning.

The outline of all lessons is clearly explained at the start so pupils know what they are trying to achieve. Often these are rightly written in books so they can be referred to later. Tasks are usually appropriate to the range of needs although, on a few occasions, those with higher ability are given the same starting point and are not then challenged throughout the lesson. A particularly good feature is the support provided in or out of class for those who are struggling. Teachers, in these cases, brief support assistants well and the support provided is also well-informed from the initial analysis of pupils' special educational need. Behaviour management is very secure and there are almost no incidences of misbehaviour because pupils have the self-discipline to know when they should question, listen or take note of others' points of view. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an understanding of how and what to teach in all subjects. As a result, pupils' learning is continuously good through all classes and years.

Marking follows a whole school policy. As well as ticks and praise, pupils are expected to make a comment about the learning objective that was set. These are then commented upon by the teacher providing a way of moving forward. In a small number of cases, these comments are not always acted upon and so subsequent work is not then altered. School assessment is thoroughly and carefully analysed and the report, supplied by the Campus Coordinator explains clearly and realistically the intricacies of the results. This is used well to define how the teaching, learning and curriculum can be reviewed, thus promoting even better progress and attainment for the pupils.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. By the time they leave, pupils in Year 6 are reaching at least the levels expected for their age and in the 2015 tests conducted by the school over half were working at levels above those expected for their age in reading and mathematics. Pupils speak well and increasingly use the correct grammar conventions. Even younger pupils speak with a wide vocabulary in correct English and, in reading and writing, have a good understanding of the use of sentences, paragraphs and parts of speech such as adjectives and adverbs. In other subjects, achievement is equally good except in ICT. Pupils have a good understanding of how to use a range of different computer programs but do not use these well enough or often enough to enhance their learning in other subjects.

Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning. They quickly settle to any task they are given, enabling teachers to concentrate on those who have difficulty. Learning is at its highest when pupils are given tasks which really stretch them such as in an art lesson when they are asked to draw pictures linked to their English poetry work on 'The Highwayman'. Pupils are happy to be told when they

have made mistakes and want to make sure they correct their work. This all makes for enlivened learning opportunities.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know the aims of the spiritual community with which they are involved. They follow these rules carefully and can explain them clearly. British values are promoted well by the school and especially so to ensure that pupils develop strong moral and social values. The personal, social, health, and economic education (PSHEE) programme provided for the school is appropriate although the school is planning to strengthen pupils' awareness of other cultures and beliefs. The school is urgently working on defining the working resources and schemes of work within the context of the Focus Learning Trust's aims. For example, pupils are less familiar with the similarities and differences between the diverse cultures of Britain. While older pupils recognise that some people have different faiths and lifestyles they cannot articulate these differences well or explain why. An instance of this involved one group undertaking some interesting work around the shooting of a teenage girl from Pakistan. The writing shows real empathy for her plight. However, the starting point for this work did not include the reasons behind the shooting and therefore there was little understanding about the cultural implications.

All pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, ably demonstrated in discussions. Behaviour is outstanding which allows all pupils to get on with their education without interruption. They have self-confidence and an ability to put their points of view across articulately. They understand democratic processes demonstrated in the school council meetings which are undertaken very maturely with little adult input. Pupils want to take part in all that is offered to them, both in lessons and in out-of-school activities. They are sensible travelling to and from school in the buses and take care of each other. Pupils happily take part in fund-raising but have very little access to activities outside of their own community. Nevertheless, the many positive attributes possessed by pupils ensure they grow into sensible, well-adjusted young people who are well-prepared for their next move to Dunstable Campus.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe are outstanding. The school has very strong administration systems to ensure there are extremely comprehensive procedures. This is because the school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding extremely seriously. A good software program ensures all policies are subject to timely review and that any new legislation is included. The process is very effectively administered. Pupils are made aware of e-safety and can, in basic terms, explain why this is necessary. They do not have a deep understanding of its implications. All websites are subject to central approval including any sites that teachers wish to use in lessons. This ensures there is very little risk of outside access. Most pupils do not have official access to any social networking either at school or at home. In discussion, they do know about cyberbullying but none of those questioned had ever experienced it. Discrete lessons are provided to ensure pupils understand about radicalisation and extremism. Again, no pupils have ever experienced this.

From discussions with pupils and from written records provided by the school there are almost no incidences of bullying. If this should occur, pupils are clear who they would speak to and that it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. All say they feel the school gives them a real sense of belonging and that their views will be acted upon. For example, the school council regularly reviews the anonymous 'suggestions box', talks through these and feels that, if the pupils suggest new ideas, these will be taken seriously. Equally they are mature enough to understand that sometimes these suggestions cannot be enacted upon.

Staff vetting is very well managed. All new appointments are carefully checked to ensure that correct references are taken up, that there are no grounds for disbarring from teaching and that all staff are fit to have contact with young people. Volunteers, bus drivers and helpers are also checked with the same rigour and nobody is allowed to work with pupils unless these checks have been completed.

There are weekly safety inspections of the premises and regular fire drills. In one case, an unplanned false fire alarm was executed well within the given timeframe. Any potential risks are quickly dealt with such as from chemicals or road safety. The comprehensive off-site risk assessments, also included within the software programme, are fully completed and indicate potential risk both in the travelling arrangements and while at the venue. For example, a recent visit to a museum included detail about trip hazard risks while accessing the building. Attendance registers are kept meticulously and there is a first day call arrangement should a pupil not arrive at school.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The new arrangements to provide a coherent line management structure using expertise from the Dunstable campus have been well established. In doing this the senior leaders have ensured that all personnel have a clear understanding of who they are responsible to and what is expected of them. The Campus Coordinator provides a convincing educational direction for the school and how and what is needed to make it continue to improve. The school's own evaluation of its performance expressed in the SET is realistic and provides judgements based on good analysis of data and a strong knowledge of the school's provision. School improvement planning is built well around these evaluations. These improvements are known and understood by staff members and acted upon efficiently.

All stakeholders, including staff, pupils and parents understand what the school is trying to achieve and how this is securely based around the Christian beliefs of the Focus Learning Trust. Therefore the Christian ethos comes across very strongly in discussions and pupils in particular try to uphold this at all times in their daily actions. Senior leaders provide excellent role models for other staff and there is an obvious shared purpose and vision. Professional development, both formal and informal is conducted by staff who, themselves, have good examples of best practice in their classroom methodology. This has improved effectively the

quality of teaching of all staff so that the best challenges and learning opportunities can be provided to pupils. This is now being enhanced further by using expertise from the Dunstable campus to provide good quality continuing professional development. All these factors have ensured that improvement has been good since the last inspection, pupils' achievement has improved and that there is a good capacity for this to continue into the future.

The school makes good use of the premises which, while small, are utilised to the best advantage of everybody. The administration area, including the staffroom, is very small although the classrooms are of sufficient size. However, good use is made of an adjacent grassed area for physical education and the outside has gardening plots for all pupils and staff to use. These are highly valued by the pupils who proudly compete for the best vegetables and flowers. Some facilities at the Dunstable campus are used and there are plans to make more trips to these specialist facilities.

The complaints procedure, as with all other administration processes, is handled highly efficiently. It is clearly accessible via the school website or through the school office. Contact with parents is carried out both formally and informally. Reports are of good quality and regular newsletters highlight the school's and pupils' successes. There is also good informal communication through conversations at the beginning and end of the day. Parents' questionnaires, to which almost all parents responded, indicate that there is overwhelming support for the school.

Governance

The effectiveness of governance is good and the trustees have ensured that all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled. Meetings are regularly undertaken and the trustees are provided with good quality information to help them in the decision-making process. The Campus Coordinator ensures that all trustees fully understand the implications of the data on pupils' performance. In a recent briefing there was good analysis of this data as well as explanations for those who are not from an educational background. Meetings for trustees have recently changed to try and ensure that as many members as possible can attend. Some trustees have been involved in the day-to-day work of the school which is helping them have a better understanding of the school's provision. Trustees are also involved in the discussions with those from other campuses to provide a better outside perspective. Some trustees take a more active role than others, such as the decisions about the curriculum. All Trustees are supportive and well-known to staff and pupils. However, the element of challenge to the school rests with only some of the Trustees. The school is finding ways of trying to improve this challenge through access to more comprehensive information.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School, Northampton Primary Campus			
Address of school:	468a Billing Rd East, Northampton NN3 3LF			
Telephone number:	01604 633819			
Email address:	Northampton.primary@focus-school.com			
Web address	http://northamptonprimary.focus-school.com/			
Proprietor:	Focus Learning Trust			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Mr Charles Magee			
Head Teacher:	Dr Philip Irwin			
DfE Number	928/6072			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£2,500 pa, with reductions for additional children			
Age range of pupils	7-11			
Gender of pupils	Mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	45	part-time	0
Number of children under-5	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	23	Girls:	22
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	0	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.