

Focus SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations

INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO
SECTION 109(1) AND (2) OF
THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT 2008

Name of school:	Focus School York Campus
DfE number: Focus number:	816/6012 208
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Ted Cohn Supporting Inspector/s: Mr Martin Cragg Mrs Christine Graham Mr Peter Jones Lay Inspector: Mr Roger Hughes
Dates of inspection:	6-8 May 2015

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Focus School – York Campus		
Address of school:	Bishopthorpe York YO23 2QA		
Telephone number:	01904 663300		
Fax number:	01904 675370		
Email address:	York.campus@focus-school.com		
Proprietor:	Northumbria Education Trust		
Campus Administrators:	Mr Gordon Hulbert Mr Antony James		
Senior Teacher:	Mrs Pam Storey		
DfE number:	816/6012		
Focus number:	208		
Type of school:	Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust		
Age range of pupils and students:	7 - 18		
Gender of pupils:	Male and female		
Total number on roll:	(Full-time)	Boys: 89	Girls: 68
	(Part-time)		
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 14	Girls: 9	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	
Type of inspection:	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008		
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Ted Cohn		
Supporting Inspector(s):	Mr Martin Cragg Mrs Christine Graham Mr Peter Jones		
Lay Inspector:	Mr Roger Hughes		
Dates of inspection:	6 to 8 May 2015		

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of 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, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by SIS and the Focus Learning Trust (FLT) and agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). It was conducted by independent professional inspectors, who looked at all aspects of the school's provision as required by the current regulations. The professional inspectors were accompanied by a trained lay inspector, who looked at agreed aspects of the school's organisation and maintenance of ethos and reported on these to the FLT. The lay inspector's findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection process.

Information about the school:

Focus School York Campus is a co-educational day school of special religious character situated on the outskirts of York. It opened in September 2014 as an amalgamation of two previous schools in Boston Spa and Middlesbrough, both now closed. The school currently provides education for 157 pupils, of whom 89 are boys and 68 are girls. They come from families living in the Harrogate, Leeds, Middlesbrough and Newcastle areas.

One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and a further six are identified with learning needs requiring specific attention. No pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Six pupils are identified as being able, gifted or talented (AGT). The buildings and grounds of the school were originally a state secondary school and became part of the College of Law before its current use. The buildings and grounds have been refurbished to a high standard. This is the first full inspection of the new school, but it received a material change inspection in October 2014 on behalf of the DfE.

Summary of main findings:

The Focus School York Campus has made very considerable progress in addressing the many issues that it faced at the time that it opened in September 2014. Only through the sterling efforts of the community and staff was the school able to open on time, with a building and grounds of high quality that create an environment that is aesthetically pleasing and highly conducive to learning. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school. The curriculum, teaching and assessment are good overall and help the great majority of pupils to make good progress. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of lesson planning and the marking of pupils' work. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is the provision for welfare, health and safety. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their work. Trustees, in particular Campus Administrators (formerly known as Chief Executive Officers), and senior managers have clearly identified issues which have arisen during the first year, have appropriately prioritised them and acted swiftly to address shortcomings. By doing so they have helped to establish a stable and positive environment in the school, which encourages pupils to make good progress in their learning. They have been

supported in this well by the Focus Learning Trust, who have provided training for staff in order to improve their teaching. In this the advisers have worked closely with senior managers in the school and have had considerable success overall. However, one of the senior managers has not been able to contribute to monitoring and staff development as effectively as they might because of heavy teaching commitments. In general, pupils are very positive about the new school, but would welcome more opportunities to contribute to its development.

What the school does well:

- The school has established a cohesive and harmonious learning community where pupils feel secure, well cared for and make good progress in their learning;
- relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent;
- the Campus Administrators and senior managers work very closely together and have managed the early development of the school very effectively;
- a committed and highly effective administrative team has provided excellent support to senior managers; and
- the school's documentation, particularly the curriculum planning documentation, has helped to ensure that pupils receive an educational experience that has breadth, progression and stability, even when there have been changes of staff.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

The school complies fully with the regulations.

What the school must do to comply with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Next Steps:

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following:

- improving the consistency in the planning of lessons and the quality of marking until it is all of good quality and consistently supports the progress and achievement of all pupils well;
- providing all senior managers with sufficient time to monitor the teaching and learning of colleagues and support improvements in their teaching; and
- allowing more opportunities for older pupils to contribute positively to the development of the school.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good. It allows each pupil to make good progress by ensuring that the tasks provided for them are relevant to their age and interests. The curriculum policy is clearly defined through plans for each key stage and subject. The schemes of work are based on the National Curriculum and schemes of work produced by FLT, commercial organisations and examination boards. They have been adapted to reflect recent changes in the National Curriculum. The good curriculum offered by the school has provided stability and continuity of provision in all subjects and year groups during a time of significant change, which has helped to sustain pupils' progress and achievement.

Pupils are taught a range of subjects, depending on their age, and this ensures that they gain experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. A clear progression in potential learning is provided in the activities planned for each year group. There is a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 3 to 9. Pupils study mathematics, English, information and communication technology (ICT), science, geography, history, physical education (PE), art, music, modern foreign languages (MFL) design and technology (DT) and personal, social, health education (PSHE). Pupils in Key Stage 4 follow GCSE examination courses in English, mathematics, science, history, a choice of modern foreign languages, citizenship and art and design technology.

Post-16 courses enable pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that they will need in their future lives. These courses have a direct link with future employment opportunities. The sixth-form curriculum is broadened by the school's use of a network of video conferencing (VC) links between schools. Cross-campus A-Level revision days are provided. A strength of the provision in the sixth form is that students can transfer knowledge and skills across a range of complementary courses.

The school's curriculum places a strong emphasis, in all age groups, on the acquisition of speaking, listening, English and mathematical skills. Self-directed learning is embedded in the sixth form but not yet in other year groups. The school actively promotes cross-phase learning through collaborative teaching and learning during themed days and through house activities. In the primary section there is one lesson of enrichment each week during which pupils can choose to study an activity of their choice, for example gardening; the activities change each half term.

The school enriches the curriculum in various ways, for example, visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and links with other schools, including a particularly good link with a Jewish Free School, and concerts, instrumental music lessons, an orchestra and whole-school sports days. A strength of the school is the use of themed days, such as the recent 'India Day', which raised pupils' awareness of cultural differences and increased their knowledge of the country. The 2015 General Election took place during the inspection and pupils of all ages were encouraged to use this event to discuss and explain their understanding of democracy. Through its

good curriculum and ethos the school actively promotes fundamental British democratic values.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school resources the provision made for these pupils exceptionally well and considers the longer term needs of the pupils in its long-term strategic planning for resources and curriculum. Staff are provided with very good support and guidance which helps them to plan for individual pupils, and the pupils' own views of their needs and the support they require is taken into account by staff when planning lessons. As yet there are too few opportunities for dialogue between managers and staff about the effectiveness of provision, but the school is aware of this and has plans to develop this aspect of its work.

Careers education and guidance is good and allows pupils to find out about a range of career options, particularly in the world of work, where pupils and their parents want them to go when they leave school. The focus of careers education and guidance is very much on preparing pupils for work, finding out what opportunities are available to them and developing skills and understanding that will support and prepare them for their future roles in work. This is reflected in many courses that pupils take in the sixth form, such as accounts, business studies and English for business. Between Years 10 and 13 pupils have mentors from the local brethren business communities who are generally 5 to 10 years into their careers. They provide support and guidance for pupils in relation to their sixth-form courses, the sort of skills they will need when they go into work, writing curriculum vitae (CVs) and letters of application, and they also help pupils to establish attainable goals in relation to their current courses and future occupations. The pupils greatly appreciate their mentors' support and guidance. Local businesses in the brethren community also come to the school for a Business Exhibition, which provides good opportunities for pupils to find out about the range of jobs available to them in the local community and which employers have vacancies. When pupils are seeking work experience placements or a job with a particular firm, they are required to write a CV and a letter of application, which their teacher and mentor help them to construct.

Increasing numbers of pupils are seeking out tertiary level courses to study and the school is encouraging them to begin courses before they leave the school. The FLT are developing a portfolio of relevant tertiary level courses to develop ex-pupils' expertise in their chosen careers. The guidance that pupils receive is highly pertinent to their chosen career paths. However, careers education does not explore sufficiently the wider context of employment, such as the occupational structures in the region in which pupils live nor the occupational structures and job opportunities within the brethren community regionally and nationally.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good overall. There are examples of excellence across a broad range of subjects and much of the teaching is good, but in a significant minority of lessons it requires improvement to reach the quality of the best. Generally the teaching is better in the secondary section of the school than it is in the primary section, although there are examples of excellent teaching in the primary section, as well as in the secondary section. Overall, the teaching is successful in

ensuring that pupils make good progress in their learning across the ability range, so that achievement is good to excellent overall.

Teachers are experienced and have a good to excellent command of their teaching material, which often in examination classes extends to detailed knowledge of examination criteria, which allows them to give helpful guidance to pupils about how to maximise the marks that they can achieve. Lessons are usually well-planned with clear and appropriate learning objectives shared with pupils and developed through the activities and learning tasks identified in lessons. These reflect the good understanding that most teachers have developed, sometimes in a very short time, of the aptitudes, needs and prior achievements of the pupils they teach. This is aided by useful information, provided by the learning support department, about the particular learning difficulties of individual pupils, and also by the sophisticated tracking system, developed for secondary pupils, to monitor closely their progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills.

Teaching addresses the learning needs of all pupils well; pupils are taught in mainstream classes with support and intervention appropriate to their needs. The school is implementing the SEN Code of Practice effectively and is fully aware of the next steps which need to be taken. Opportunities are provided for managers and staff to share ideas and training with other FLT schools and this ensures that provision is effective and consistent. There is a growing confidence in the school's leadership of this area and this is helping the school to make rapid progress. The school identifies its most able pupils and tracks their achievement closely so that they make good progress in their learning.

Teachers in general make effective use of a good range of resources available to support teaching and learning, including ICT. However, the school libraries do not provide such a good resource for learning and include some material that is now dated, about which the school knows and is addressing. The premises and accommodation support teaching very well through establishing a learning environment of high quality, with specialist accommodation that is well suited for its purpose. Pupils greatly appreciate this.

The best lessons are marked by a driving pace, excellent command of teaching material, clear and well-focused learning objectives, which address closely the learning needs of all pupils and include interesting and challenging tasks that enthuse and excite them. More generally most teachers provide high-quality explanations and use questions very effectively to consolidate and test knowledge and understanding, as well as to explore issues. In less successful lessons planning quite often focuses mainly on covering a curriculum topic, rather than addressing the learning needs of pupils; these lessons proceed at a slow pace and do not enthuse or challenge some or all pupils sufficiently.

Marking is generally constructive and regular, on occasion making helpful comments about the achievement and sometimes about how pupils could improve their work. There are examples of excellent practice in identifying what pupils have achieved and specifically what they need to do in order to continue making good progress in their learning. More generally, marking is not so effective in supporting their progress, often lacking a tight enough focus on exactly what pupils have achieved and how pupils can continue to make good progress in their learning. Although marking quite often identifies work that has not been completed or which contains technical issues such as careless or incorrect use of punctuation, teachers quite

frequently do not then insist on pupils completing unfinished work or correcting their spelling and grammatical mistakes.

The school has developed a very effective framework for the assessment of its secondary pupils, which is well regarded by staff and pupils and provides information that measures pupils' progress in learning in a manner that teachers and pupils find helpful in identifying achievement and progress against national norms. In the primary section of the school staff are also working on developing effective tracking processes, in conjunction with FLT, but the system is not yet as effective in tracking progress as it is in the secondary section of the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 2 - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through its ethos and curriculum the school actively promotes the fundamental British values. Pupils know right from wrong and the curriculum enables them to understand the importance of the civil and criminal laws of the country. A local police officer recently gave an assembly on keeping safe in the car and on the street, as well as cyber-bullying and e-safety. History, PSHEE, citizenship and current affairs lessons emphasise the importance of individual liberty. Pupils show tolerance of and respect for those with different faiths and beliefs and are aware of the importance of equality in the treatment of minority groups. The school recently hosted pupils and a teacher from a local Jewish school who spoke about their religion and their community. This event, together with an off-timetable day for most of the pupils, showing Indian customs, dress, food and religious celebrations, helped pupils to appreciate the values of tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions in England. The school has plans to build on these initiatives to explore other cultures.

Fundamental to the school's values are high standards of courtesy, respect and tolerance of others, together with the expectation that pupils at all times behave responsibly. The school is a well-regulated and disciplined community, and pupils show good levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Behaviour is generally excellent, but not always so good when teaching is less purposeful. Pupils willingly participate as prefects and as year representatives on the School Council. Pupils respect each other and the adults with whom they work. They show initiative in organising fundraising for local and international charities, for example, for a local hospice and the recent Nepal earthquake appeal. Some of the older pupils say they would like to be able to have more opportunities to take on roles of responsibility and to participate more in activities such as the India Day.

Preparation for future economic well-being is good as is the preparation pupils receive for taking their place as responsible members of British society. In Year 11, pupils undertake a work experience programme, and sixth-form students are well supported by the school and the community in preparing job applications and obtaining employment. Pupils show good awareness of the democratic process and of the political culture and institutions of the UK. They participate in elections for their School Council, and were well informed about the General Election which took place at the time of the inspection. Awareness of the basis on which the law is made

and applied develops through lessons in citizenship and law in the senior school. The school plans to develop further pupils' self-confidence and awareness of the democratic process through the introduction of a debating forum. The school raises money for local charities, including a hospice, and for international charity appeals. Pupils also take on a range of responsibilities within the school, for example as prefects, Head Boy and Girl, and monitors.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Safeguarding is a central feature of the school. The Child Protection Policy follows national and Focus Learning Trust guidance and procedures are robust. Staff have all completed basic safeguarding training and know how to recognise and report any concerns about pupils. Pupils are cared for well and known individually by staff. The school is active in promoting the well-being of pupils. The Deputy Headteacher is the senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and is supported by an experienced teacher and two trustees, all of whom have received the appropriate level of training. There is always a trained DSL on site. There are appropriate links with the local safeguarding board and local authority. The school promotes e-safety and pupils are required to sign a contract governing their responsible and safe use of computers. They have recently been briefed on the dangers of cyber-bullying by a police officer. The school takes its duties under *Keeping Children Safe in Education* seriously, including the careful control of access to sources of research using IT. The community also exercises close oversight of the use of computers at home.

The school has a comprehensive range of effective policies to promote pupils' health, safety and well-being. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to play actively and engage in sport. They learn about healthy living in science, food technology and physical education. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and its different forms. They say there are very few incidents and that these are dealt with promptly and effectively by senior staff. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school. The school's behaviour policy is displayed in all classrooms. Pupils know the expectations placed upon them and understand the system of rewards and sanctions. They say that behaviour is good and that their learning is rarely interrupted. This is confirmed by inspectors' experience in lessons and around the school. Levels of supervision are good at breaks and lunchtimes and movement around the school is calm and orderly. Around a third of secondary pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that their views were not listened to and taken account of by the school.

All the requirements for health and safety are met, including fire safety, first aid provision, safety signs and medical needs. This is a strength of the school. Thorough risk assessments have been reviewed and acted upon rapidly to remedy any concerns, for example, the relocation of swimming lessons, and special arrangements for examination candidates in the event of a fire evacuation. The procedures for school trips and bus travel are thorough and ensure safety. Trustees receive regular reports on health and safety matters, and review any issues or concerns, implementing relevant actions to remedy them. The school has a written First Aid policy and is well resourced with eight qualified first aiders holding up-to-

date certificates. First aid kits, eye wash and burn kits are suitably placed in higher risk, specialist areas, such as science technology and food technology. Secure storage is provided for chemicals and hazardous substances. Details of first aiders and safeguarding contacts are prominently displayed around the school.

The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained according to statutory requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 4 - Suitability of the staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all the necessary checks on staff, volunteers and trustees, and the single central register of appointments is completed and maintained as required.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of high quality. They enhance the curriculum and aid pupils' learning. The school is located on a spacious and attractive site with ample space for play and sports activities, pleasant classrooms and well-equipped specialist subject areas for science, technology, food technology, music, art, computing and independent study, together with a self-contained primary suite.

The buildings have been refurbished to a high standard and are very well maintained with very efficient internal and external lighting. Large open areas are used well for physical education, assemblies, dining, recreation and independent study. The school also has separate changing rooms for boys and girls, equipped with showers. Separate toilet facilities for primary and secondary age pupils are clean and well maintained. Drinking water is provided through dispensers in corridors and the hall.

The medical room is very well equipped and is supplemented by a hygiene suite catering for pupils' specific medical needs, a physiotherapy room and a sensory area. There is disabled access to the ground floor and a lift to the mezzanine floor.. The school is secure and has effective systems for controlling access to the buildings and site. The control of traffic at the start and end of school, given that almost all pupils arrive by minibus, is well organised and safe.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

Parents are provided with a good range of information that keeps them well-informed about various aspects of school life through the school prospectus and handbook,

regular newsletters, the Open Day, letters to parents and primary year group assemblies.

Parents' evenings and reports ensure that parents are well-informed about their children's progress. The school is quick to contact parents if they have any concerns and respond quickly if parents raise any issues. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the education of their children.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 7 - The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school has adopted the FLT complaints policy and procedures meet all the necessary requirements. There have been no complaints this year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 8 - The quality and effectiveness of leadership in and management of schools

Senior managers in the school and trustees, particularly the Campus Administrators, have complementary and highly appropriate skills, which allow them to provide high-quality leadership and management. This has helped the school to address the many difficulties it faced in an efficient and effective manner, so that it has become well-established. The clear and well-focused school improvement plan identifies clearly what still needs improvement and how it will be achieved. Senior managers and trustees have paid close attention to the recently revised independent school regulations in order to ensure the school meets them fully. These have been a key theme of the work of senior managers and the trustees.

Senior managers work very closely with trustees to promote the well-being of pupils. Safeguarding has been given close attention in order to ensure that pupils are kept safe and well cared for. In relation to safeguarding the school is developing good links with the local authority. Improving the quality of teaching and learning has also been a high priority and has been largely successful. Senior managers, other than the Headteacher, have been given some time to monitor and develop staff, but this has been insufficient to be effective in helping to ensure that all teaching is good.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SECTION C: ORGANISATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

This section is not a requirement of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The Lay Inspector evaluated both the school ethos and the Trustees' stewardship of resources and produced an internal report for the Focus Learning Trust, which is summarised below.'

The quality of the organisation and maintenance of the ethos of the school

The Focus School York Campus was opened in September 2014, replacing the previous schools at Boston Spa and Middlesbrough. Pupils come from families living in Harrogate, Leeds, Middlesbrough and Newcastle, with some travelling considerable distances to the school. Arrangements for transport are well organised and closely supervised.

The early days of the school were challenging. Getting the new school ready for pupils when it was only vacated by the previous owners three days before the start of term was a major undertaking and only achieved because of the tremendous commitment of the community and staff at the school. The premises and grounds of the school are very pleasant and provide a good learning environment, which is much appreciated by the pupils.

During the early weeks of the school's existence, owing to unforeseen circumstances, there was no headteacher in place. In this period the senior managers, administrator and the Campus Advisers coped admirably with various issues, which included some staff finding the travelling from previous schools too difficult to manage. By half term the school had appointed a very experienced headteacher, who had just retired from an Executive Headship position in Focus schools. Working closely with her senior managers, the administrator and Campus Administrators, the Headteacher ensured that the school made rapid progress in establishing stability and teaching and learning that allowed pupils to make good progress.

The school is now in a good position to make further progress. There are good relationships between trustees and amongst staff and pupils, who have integrated well. Links between the primary and secondary sections of the school are good and likely to ensure a smooth transition from one to the other at the end of the academic year. The school has a clear and appropriate school improvement plan to guide its further development. Nevertheless, the school will continue to need considerable support from the trustees as a new headteacher establishes himself in the school, in order to ensure that it continues to make good progress in all aspects of its provision.

Could the organisation and maintenance of the ethos of the school be improved?

- the new arrangements for September 2015 will need careful consideration. This will be the first headship for the new head and there will be other new staff as well; and
- the ongoing trustee ensemble needs to ensure that well established trustees, knowledgeable in their own spheres, who can work together in an effective

team, are able to give firm guidance and support to the whole campus, especially the Headteacher.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust. Further copies of the report are available from the Operations Manager of the Focus Learning Trust, Exchange Place, Poseidon Way, Warwick, CV34 6BY, or from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.