

SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

Independent professional inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust

INSPECTION REPORT

INSPECTION CARRIED OUT ACCORDING TO SECTION 162A OF THE EDUCATION ACT 2002

Name of school:	Riverside Study Centre
DCSF number:	341/6051
FOCUS number:	210
Inspection team::	Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Meg Buckingham Mrs Cecile Corfield Lay Inspector: Mr Mike Thomas
Dates of inspection:	13 -16 November 2007

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: Riverside Study Centre

Address of the school: Stretton Way
Huyton Business Park
Merseyside L36 6JF

Telephone number: 0151 480 4000

Fax number: 0151 949 5680

Proprietor: Allerton Education Trust

Name of Chief Executive Officer: Mr Peter Devenish

Name of Director of Studies: Mr Harri Davies

DCSF number: 341/6051

FOCUS number: 210

Type of school: Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust

Age range of pupils and students: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Male and female

Total number on roll: (Full time) Boys: 18 Girls: 32

(Part time) Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Number of post-16 students: Boys: 7 Girls: 8

Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:

Boys: 0 Girls: 0

Annual fees: No fees charged

Type of inspection: Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector: Dr Martin Bradley

Supporting Inspectors: Mrs Meg Buckingham
Mrs Cecile Corfield

Lay Inspector: Mr Mike Thomas

Dates of inspection: 13 -16 November 2007

PART A: INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service in accordance with Section 162(A) (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, and it follows the inspection framework laid down by the Service and the Focus Learning Trust and agreed with the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). 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 management and ethos and reported on these to the Focus Learning Trust. His 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:

Riverside Study Centre was established in 2003 by the Allerton Education Trust. It is affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust (FLT) and follows its policies and principles. Pupils come from the families of the Brethren communities in Liverpool, Chester and Crewe. In 2007 a primary school was opened near Crewe, with the same trustees and Director of Studies. As this is separately registered with the DCSF, it is not part of the present inspection and report. The two schools intend to move to one site when possible. At the time of the inspection, there were fifty pupils on roll in the senior school, of whom fifteen were in Years 12 and 13. This is the first year that the school has had Year 13 students. No pupil has a statement of special educational need.

Summary of main findings:

The quality of education is good overall. The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences well suited to most pupils' levels of ability. Teaching is effective and enables all pupils to make good progress. Provision for the pupils' personal development is outstanding. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory. The school meets most of the regulations.

What the school does well:

- its quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding;
- its pupils behave extremely well at all times;
- its quality of teaching is good overall and there were some examples of outstanding teaching; and
- its pupils' attitudes to learning and their responses in lessons are frequently good and in the sixth form often outstanding.

What the school must do to comply with the regulations:

- attend to the health and safety issues referred to in Part B of this report.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

- in order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should devise a three year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

PART B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is good and enables pupils to make good progress. The provision clearly reflects the school's aims, Christian ethos and its affiliation to the Focus Learning Trust. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is firmly based on the National Curriculum, with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT). It is effective in promoting pupils' learning. Both boys and girls study design and technology at Key Stage 3 and have the option, should they wish, to continue studying these areas into Key Stage 4. All pupils throughout the school follow Bible Studies, music and 'carousel', which includes personal, social and health education (PSHE), with typing, citizenship and study skills, and in Years 12 and 13 current affairs.

At Key Stage 4 pupils study a broad range of subjects for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), including statistics and economics. These additional subjects, together with early entry for GCSE in Year 10, provide useful additional challenges for the more able. Year 13 provision was introduced for the first time in 2007. The school currently seeks to provide appropriate practical, vocational and academic courses at advanced level to meet the needs of students of different abilities and aptitudes. The implementation of this provision is at an early stage. The overall nature and rationale for this post-16 provision has yet to be systematically developed and documented, including its links with provision at Key Stage 4.

Overall, schemes of work are adequate in providing a long-term overview for each subject. Account is taken of the FLT schemes. In general, however, schemes in all subjects lack detail and are not sufficiently closely linked to the school assessment procedures. Work experience is well organised by a trustee and a community member, and all pupils in Years 11 have two weeks' experience in industry. On returning to school each pupil prepares a presentation on their experience for parents, fellow pupils and employers. They gain in self-confidence and develop valuable personal skills as well as a good knowledge and understanding of the world of work. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their interests through extra-curricular activities.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, although the quality of assessment varies from satisfactory to good. There is a need for a clearer overview of assessment and for this policy to be implemented throughout the school in all subjects. The teachers work hard and in a large majority of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better. No lesson had inadequate teaching. In turn the pupils' responses were good or better in virtually every lesson and outstanding in several. Again, none was inadequate. From entering Year 7 with achievement mainly at or slightly below national expectations, pupils achieve well. They make good progress, with the result that by the end of Key Stage 3 they mostly achieve at or above national expectations. This good rate of progress is maintained up to GCSE and in the sixth form, although in GCE A/S and A2 courses student numbers are small. As several of these courses are relatively new, there is limited evidence from current or past years.

Pupils show particularly good and often outstanding attitudes towards their work. During the inspection, Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 joined two other Focus schools for a Young Enterprise Masterclass day working in mixed school and age groups. In this

complex project students were very enthusiastic. They have learned to use a good range of skills effectively, showing outstanding cooperation, as well as enthusiastically concentrating on their tasks.

Teachers' planning for lessons is good overall. However opportunities to plan for tasks matched to the full range of pupil's abilities is not sufficiently evident. Teachers have good knowledge of their pupils' past achievements. This supports the pupils' progress, as does their particularly good classroom behaviour and concentration. For the great majority of pupils the work presents an appropriate level of challenge, although the more able are sometimes insufficiently challenged. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their research and investigative skills but relish the few opportunities which are provided. The school is aware of this and introduced an independent learning week last summer which several pupils referred to enthusiastically in discussions.

Assessment is currently under review. The present complex system uses a range of standardised tests as well as individual targets which are discussed with each pupil by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of Studies. This careful approach is not fully reflected in the pupils' understanding of targets based on National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 or GCSE grade levels in Years 10 and 11, nor is it sufficiently regularly reinforced in teachers' marking of work. The proposed computer-based system with a simplified target system seeks to be more understandable and more easily used by all concerned.

There is particularly good support for pupils with additional learning needs and disabilities. The consideration of their needs and the subsequent programmes of action are carefully designed. These pupils make good progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding. The school provides particularly effectively for their personal development. The pupils' behaviour is exemplary due to the clear and well-understood code of conduct and effective class management. Pupils acknowledge their enjoyment of school and the progress that they make. They clearly distinguish right from wrong and accept responsibility for their own behaviour. They are eager to learn and keen to participate in lessons. Senior pupils are given appropriate responsibilities in the day-to-day running of the school and in administration. They carry out these duties in a highly efficient manner. An effective school council allows pupils to voice their ideas and to make a positive contribution to the school community. Year 10 pupils run a Fair Trade shop each week, promoting healthy eating and an awareness of ethically produced food. Trustees respond rapidly to any sensible requests from pupils, such as putting anti-glare film on windows and providing lockers for Year 7 pupils.

Provision to develop the pupils' appreciation of their own culture is particularly good. The school makes positive efforts and successfully develops the pupils' awareness of other cultures. This is achieved through the PSHE scheme of work and carefully identified cross-curricular links. For example, food from other cultures is prepared in cookery, multi-cultural texts and plays are used in English, and in Years 12 and 13 current affairs includes consideration of Britain as a multi-cultural society. The school provides pupils with a good general knowledge of public institutions in England.

Preparation for pupils economic well being and understanding includes the study of managing money and budgeting, as well as international financial services. This provides them with a detailed understanding of the processes and issues involved in developing their economic well being. This provision is outstanding.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory overall. Good features include pastoral care, behaviour management, child protection and health education. A number of health and safety matters require action. These include the need for up-to-date risk assessments for practical areas, outstanding issues from the last fire risk assessment, and updating electrical testing. Overall, whilst some procedures are carried out, they are not always recorded properly. The admission and attendance registers do not meet the regulations.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles, although provision for physical education (PE) is limited. There is a 'healthy school' policy, which includes a 'five a day' campaign. Health awareness is promoted in science lessons, and cold drinking water is available at all times. The school ensures that pupils are valued as members of the school community.

An appropriate number of full time staff are trained in First Aid. Pupils are well supervised throughout the day and all staff are trained in child protection procedures. Although the school has a policy which seeks to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, it does not have a three-year statement of its intentions to meet the requirements of the Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do in order to fully meet the requirements?

- have full regard to the DCSF guidance *Health and safety: responsibilities and powers* (paragraph 3(4));
- ensure that the recommendations of the fire risk assessment made in June 2007 are fully carried out (paragraph 3(5)); and
- maintain the admission and attendance registers with clear entries, in ink and not pencil and without using correction fluid (paragraph 3(9)).

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002?

- *Devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school follows the FLT guidance on the recruitment and appointment of staff and appropriate checks are made prior to staff joining the school.

All trustees, teachers and volunteers have been checked in the appropriate way with the Criminal Records Bureau although in three cases, the school is awaiting responses to checks on recently appointed people.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation meet the requirements for registration. The premises are used fully and some rooms, especially for practical subjects, are relatively small for their current purposes. The school is actively planning to move to new premises, where it can be joined by the separate primary school. However, as yet no date has been firmly set for this move.

Besides the main building, demountable cabins supplement the accommodation. In classrooms and corridors, displays of pupils' work and posters improve the learning environment. However, there are few pinboards for displaying work, which instead is put directly onto the walls. Use is made of a local leisure centre for PE and this supplements the school's relatively confined outdoor play space. Specialist classrooms provide for design and technology, food studies and science. The school is well aware of these limitations and, over the longer term, intends to address them.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The quality of information for parents

The school provides the parents with detailed information about its work, and the trustees are drawn from the Brethren community, thereby supporting parent-school communications. At present parents receive pupils' reports which are subject based but with no overall summary nor a statement on pupils' personal development. The subject reports lack detail and information on how the pupils might improve their work. Some parents expressed concern about the limited number of educational visits as well as being not particularly well informed on their child's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

The effectiveness of the school's complaints procedure

The school has adopted the FLT complaints procedures and practices and these are fully in place. There have been no complaints during the past year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART C: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

This section is not a requirement of the Education Act 2002. The business organisation and management of the school were inspected by the Lay Inspector, who has written this section of the report.

The quality of the organisation and management of the school

The school has a Board of nine trustees. This meets every two months, with some trustees participating by teleconference calls. The stated aim of seeking to 'stretch' each student according to his or her ability is being broadly met.

There is a clear management structure with some powers being delegated to six committees, each chaired by a trustee. The foremost committee is the Academic Committee which meets each half term and consists of the CEO, three other trustees, the Director of Studies and the Senior Teacher. This is a useful arrangement. The Senior Leadership Team meets weekly and its membership includes the CEO, Director of Studies, Senior Teacher and the Learning Support Coordinator. The staff spoke highly of the work done by the management.

At present there are three initiatives – the primary school, Year 13 and the proposed move to new premises. Although some of this work is delegated to the committees, the management should consider their workload, so that the developments do not distract managers from their oversight of the core school activities

The Focus schools ethos is implemented in full. Pastoral care is comprehensive, and extends from the senior teacher as well as Year 12 and 13 students. There are no behavioural or discipline problems.

At present the work of the school secretary is shared amongst two part time staff supported by sixth form students. As the school moves towards a more ICT based system of working, strains are being placed upon the present arrangements.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

- *the senior management should consider their workload, so that they do not lose sight of their management of the core school activities; and*
- *reconsider the present administrative and secretarial arrangements in view of the increased use of ICT to collect and store information: appoint a secretary who is ICT literate and trained to gather and review information on identified aspects of the administration of the school.*

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, Siskin House, Siskin Drive, Coventry, or from the Focus Learning Trust website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk