

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:	Linton Park School
DfE number: FOCUS number:	886/6104 507
Inspection team:	Reporting Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell Supporting Inspectors: Mr Simon Bennett Mrs Cecile Corfield Lay Inspector: Mr Phillip Hutchinson
Dates of inspection:	15th – 18th March 2011

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SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Linton Park School	
Address of school:	Heath Road, Linton, Maidstone, Kent, ME17 4HT	
Telephone number:	01622 740820	
Fax number:	01622 740822	
Email address:	linton.admin@focuslearningorg.com	
Proprietor:	Medway Education Trust	
Name of Chief Executive Officers:	Mr Chris Beattie, Mr Clive Groombridge, Mr Steve Lyon, Mr Vince Woodcock	
Name of Senior Teacher:	Mr Christopher Allen	
DfE number:	886/6104	
FOCUS number:	507	
Type of school:	Independent school affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust	
Age range of pupils and students:	8 -18	
Gender of pupils:	Male and female	
Total number on roll: (Full time)	Boys: 87	Girls: 62
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 22	Girls: 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 0	Girls: 0
Annual fees:	Not applicable	
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002	
Inspection Team: Reporting Inspector:	Mr Mike Thirkell	
Supporting Inspectors:	Mr Simon Bennett Mrs Cecile Corfield	
Lay Inspector:	Mr Philip Hutchinson	
Dates of inspection:	15 th – 18 th March 2011	

SECTION 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 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 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:

Linton Park School is an independent school of special religious character, which serves the Brethren Communities of Kent, Sussex and south London. It originally opened in September 2005 in temporary accommodation bringing together boys and girls previously educated in a number of study centres. It relocated to its present purpose-built accommodation in Linton, near Maidstone in Kent, in January 2008. The new school incorporates primary school provision for pupils in Key Stage 2, for those who previously received their education in a range of other schools. The school is registered for 172 pupils and there are currently 149 on roll, of whom 44 are in the primary department and 28 in the sixth form. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, although the school has identified 23 pupils who require additional support for learning difficulties, of whom three are in the primary department.

The school's core aims emphasise that: *'At this school, pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential and acquire the discipline of Learning to Learn while upholding fundamental Christian teachings and beliefs, especially those of purity, integrity and Godliness'* and that *'the truth and authority of the Holy Bible and strong family values underpin the commitment of the school to provide quality in every facet of education'*.

Summary of main findings:

Linton Park School is a successful school which meets its challenging core aims. It is now well established in its new, purpose-built accommodation and has rapidly developed its provision for Key Stage 2 pupils. Under the dynamic management and leadership of the head teacher and the management group of trustees, the school has continued to develop and progress effectively since the last inspection. The management of the school has the strong support of an expert and hardworking staff and pupils say they are happy to be at the school, which also benefits from the strong support of its parents. Pupils' responses to the learning opportunities provided at all levels and the high quality of their behaviour express their enjoyment of learning. The quality of education is good throughout, with a significant number of outstanding features. The curriculum and teaching are good and have outstanding features. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress are outstanding. Pupils make good progress relative to their abilities, and as exemplified by the school's most recent results in public examinations. The quality of provision for

pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Although there are occasional incidents of poor behaviour recorded in pupils' files, behaviour is of high quality overall. Pupils are well cared for and procedures for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are good. The school has continued to make progress since the last inspection most notably with respect to the development of effective schemes of work, the procedures used for monitoring and assessing pupils' work and progress and the provision of well-differentiated tasks in subjects throughout the curriculum. It meets all the regulations for registration as an independent school.

What the school does well:

- it fosters good relationships at all levels;
- its premises and accommodation are of very high quality and are appreciated by the pupils;
- it ensures that the staff are well informed about all key areas relating to its provision through a programme of professional development; and
- it encourages all parts of its community to work together to contribute to the high quality of the whole school.

Next Steps:

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure more planned opportunities in the careers programme for making use of the business expertise within the school's wider community;
- improve and extend the provision of extra-curricular activities;
- review and extend opportunities for gifted and talented pupils; and
- improve the quality of some subject reports.

The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and it has a number of outstanding features. It successfully provides all pupils with a broad and balanced education. The curriculum for all pupils of compulsory school age in both the primary and secondary departments is thorough and firmly based on the National Curriculum, modified to meet the expectations and guidance of the Focus Learning Trust. It covers all the expected areas of learning in both primary and secondary schools. The curriculum provides ample opportunities for pupils to make good progress as they move through the school, exemplified by their results in public examinations at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 at GCSE and GCE Advanced level respectively. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills, for example through opportunities provided in lessons for discussion and debate, when they are encouraged to express their views in classes and through assemblies. Pupils throughout the school learn the importance of listening to the views of others, supported by the example of their teachers listening to what they have to say.

Long and short-term planning is thorough and between Year 7 and Year 11 the curriculum is supported by very detailed schemes of work which set out the aims for each subject. Schemes of work are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that the curriculum provides a progressive learning experience for all pupils from year to year. The primary curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to work with secondary specialist teachers for physical education (PE), music, French, science and food technology, which pupils say they enjoy, promoting a smooth transition between Years 6 and 7. From Year 7 to Year 11 all pupils study French, music is included through choral work and the curriculum is further extended through one lesson a week of Bible Studies. Students in the sixth form have a good range of subjects available based broadly on two pathways: vocational, including BTEC courses, and academic Advanced Level GCE courses. This is a good range, given the relatively small size of the sixth form. The curriculum for the sixth form is regularly reviewed in order to provide a curriculum matched to the individual needs of the students and to ensure, where appropriate, a mix of vocational and academic options, based on appropriate advice. Review of the current provision and feedback from students has led to the school making firm plans to provide French at Advanced Level next academic year. All pupils have suitable opportunities for PE and games, supported by the school's indoor and outdoor provision.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and available through differentiated tasks in classes, in-class support and withdrawal for specific tasks. Pupils who receive additional support may lose one period of French each week. Thorough procedures are employed to identify pupils' individual learning needs early by a range of tests as well as from records of previous attainment, subsequently supported by the effective monitoring of the progress of all pupils. Provision is supported by monitoring and review of progress and consultation with parents. Appropriate individual education plans are prepared for all pupils identified as requiring additional support for learning difficulties; these are prepared by class teachers in Years 4, 5 and 6 and for Years 7 to Year 11 by the special needs co-

ordinator to inform teachers' planning. The school is alert to the need to continue to improve its response to the wide range of pupils' learning needs, for example through providing dyslexia training for staff and through a recently formed 'accessing the curriculum' working group. Provision for able pupils is a developing feature, resulting in strategies for identifying those pupils who are gifted and those who are talented. The high quality of monitoring of progress is a key support in this process. There are already procedures to support the most able through differentiation in classes, including provision of more challenging work and there are one or two pupils who are currently in classes above their chronological age.

A well-planned programme for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) supported by citizenship throughout the school follows the guidance of the Focus Learning Trust. In Years 4 to 6, opportunities for PSHE are incorporated into a wide range of lessons, and in Years 7 to 11 the programme is supported by visits and visitors, for example local police officers. There is a limited range of extra-curricular opportunities as a consequence of the long journeys travelled by pupils each day, although a good range of enrichment activities is provided within the curriculum. The school is actively considering how to improve the provision of extra-curricular activities.

Provision for careers education is good and has a number of notable strengths. A key component of the current provision is the 'Linton Park Student Employability Profile', aimed at guiding pupils in achieving those generic skills most likely to help them to become successful employers and employees. The careers programme provides a developing range of useful experiences which contribute to pupils' preparation for adult life and their future lives. Provided mainly through PSHE, it receives additional support from specialists from outside the school who provide a one-day course for pupils in Years 9 to 11; this concentrates on time management, interviews and the preparation of CVs. A two-day course for sixth formers focuses on planning and setting up a business. BTEC students have had the opportunity of spending time in Brethren businesses. In Year 10, pupils have an opportunity for one week's work experience. A school survey confirms that parents value careers as an important part of the curriculum. Despite the many strengths of the careers programme, there are not yet sufficient planned opportunities for using the rich opportunities presented by the range of businesses within the Brethren community. In the sixth form, students have a range of opportunities which assist their personal development and preparation for their future lives, for example through visits organised within the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good throughout the school and has a number of significantly outstanding features. The high quality of teaching is a key factor in supporting pupils of all ages and abilities in making good and sometimes outstanding progress relative to their abilities. The guidance and support of the well-qualified and experienced teaching staff is central to the good progress pupils make, supported by the outstanding systems established for monitoring and assessing their work. The teachers' expertise and effectiveness are supported by an appropriate programme of training and professional development. The quality of teaching throughout the school is supported by the excellent relationships between teachers and their pupils. Pupils say that they recognise and appreciate the support provided by their teachers and that teachers are always available to help with improving their work, providing additional time and, where necessary, clarifying their understanding.

Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons in considerable detail, guided by high expectations and reflecting teachers' strong commitment to their pupils. Pupils commented spontaneously that they recognised the hard work and commitment of teachers in planning lessons that are interesting and are conducted at a good pace. Planning reflects how learning and understanding are developed progressively to ensure that they are suited to the needs of all pupils in each class. Planning is well informed by information that teachers receive about pupils' individual learning needs and analysis of their progress from the school's data and monitoring.

Questioning is used effectively throughout the school. Particularly in the secondary school, teachers are conscious of the need to pitch their questions according to the individual needs of pupils. In general, teachers use questioning well to ensure that all abilities in a class are included in the learning activity and to encourage pupils who are less able or less confident to play a full part in the lesson. Good use is made of questioning to encourage pupils to reflect on and build upon previous knowledge and it is used effectively to challenge the most able. Overall, teachers understand the need to listen to what pupils have to contribute. Questioning skills are mostly used effectively to assess pupils' understanding, but occasionally younger children are given insufficient time to think through their answers. Resources are used effectively to support learning. Teachers' planning for lessons includes the use of well-prepared resources and worksheets. For example, interactive white boards make an important contribution to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the primary department. In the best lessons, teachers use examples skilfully to clarify aspects of learning that some pupils find challenging. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics class the teacher used simple everyday examples to clarify a pupil's understanding of quadratic equations. However, opportunities for cross-curricular links, though used well in some lessons, are not always taken.

The quality of assessment is outstanding throughout the school. Pupils' progress is monitored very thoroughly. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The strategies are both thorough and informed. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress are exceptionally good, for example using a simple 'traffic light' system which identifies those pupils whose work is above, at and below expectation. The school collects data about pupils' previous achievement when they enter the school and uses a range of tests, including national tests to develop their understanding of each child's learning needs and, where necessary, to identify additional support. Marking and feedback to pupils are generally good throughout and follow the school's guidance, despite occasional inconsistencies. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the feedback usually ensures that pupils are able to understand what is good about a piece of work and what can be done to improve. However, occasionally the written feedback provided for pupils is not clearly written, particularly for the least able. Nevertheless, overall pupils say that they find the marking and feedback they receive useful in informing them of how they are improving. In the primary school, verbal and written feedback in workbooks and during lessons is excellent, as it is both constructive and positive.

Effective systems are established for ensuring that those pupils who are identified as falling below expectations, or having difficulty with learning, receive one-to-one support. For example, in the primary department any pupil found to be under-achieving is given individual attention in twice-weekly sessions until they are confident in the identified area. The school already provides support for pupils identified as particularly able, and is in the process of refining this support. The

outstanding strategies for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress are a key factor in their success. Information about pupils' progress across a range of subjects is regularly analysed to inform planning and to identify where additional support is needed. Analysis of the value added by subjects informs improvement and is a major component in the school's ongoing drive to raising standards further.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development throughout the school is outstanding, and pupils' behaviour is usually of high quality. Their spiritual development is based on the strength of family and community life, and is reinforced by the fulfilment of the ethos of the school and through the Bible Studies course. Pupils' moral development is founded on the daily life of the school, and aspects of the curriculum up to Year 11 such as PSHE and citizenship provide guidance and emphasise responsibility and awareness of the needs of others. This theme is highlighted in the school's self-evaluation, which attributes pupils' development to the successful implementation of its policies for behaviour management, PSHE, citizenship and vocational courses.

In interview, pupils illustrated their increasing awareness of their roles and contribution within the school, and expressed appreciation of the quality of teaching, their relationships with each other and with teachers, and the commitment to their development shown by the school community as a whole. There is an increasing emphasis on providing opportunities for responsibility, and senior pupils were involved in working on the school development plan. This emphasis is also evident in the School Council and the Student Employability Profile. Senior students are committed to supporting the buddy system, where Year 13 students work with younger year groups, so facilitating development of leadership skills. The link with a charity called 'Link Ethiopia' strengthens pupils' awareness of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves.

There are extended opportunities for understanding other cultures within the curriculum and learning about public institutions and services, through the content of lessons in a wide range of subjects, displays around the school and the considerable number of trips and visits. The school has sought the pupils' views on increased Responsibilities, and a meeting at Leeds Castle involving trustees, senior management and senior pupils was held to discuss what more they could contribute. This was carefully minuted and recorded and has been acted upon. Such involvement encourages increasing confidence and self-esteem among the pupils. Senior pupils affirmed their appreciation of what the school is providing and acknowledged the benefits of visits, such as that to a team building centre, in the breaking down of barriers between year groups. A Year 12 assembly attended by the whole school focused responsibly on raising awareness of the perils of alcohol. Overall, the provision for pupils' personal development throughout the school, including in the primary department, is of high quality and is bolstered by strong input from PSHE and citizenship. Its impact is exemplified through the response of the pupils and their respect for each other and their working environment.

Pupils clearly appreciate and enjoy school. Social and moral awareness is taught assiduously, and staff serve as strong and positive role models. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. The teachers' response to the needs of pupils through individual contact and tutor time, and through the curriculum and assessment, displays their understanding of where to pitch support, and whether to encourage or to adopt a carefully evaluated disciplinary approach. Increased emphasis is being put on the needs of specific groups of pupils and the educational needs of individuals through further provision of resources, enabling pupils to assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All the required policies are implemented effectively and aim to minimise risks incurred by pupils at all times, including on out-of-school visits. Much diligent work has been done to ensure that appropriate documentation supports the policies. Arrangements for pupils' safeguarding are secure. The named persons for child protection have received training from Kent County Council, in line with current guidance, and this has been disseminated to all staff.

Pupils, staff and parents report that they appreciate the safe, caring environment provided by the school. They feel that pupils are helped to settle in well when they join the school and that they are kept safe at all times. The school promotes healthy living through many opportunities for physical education and through studies in science, food technology and PSHE. All pupils are encouraged to drink sufficient water during the day.

The behaviour management policy reflects the school's ethos and is implemented consistently in and out of lessons. Strategies to promote anti-bullying awareness have been studied by staff and pupils say that bullying is not a major problem at Linton Park. Staff are excellent role models and have high expectations of acceptable behaviour. As a result, pupils throughout the school are well behaved, self-disciplined and show consideration to others. Pupils are closely supervised throughout the day and when travelling. Owing to the day-to-day level of care and the effective procedures observed by teachers, problems are addressed very quickly and there have been only a few serious sanctions for misbehaviour. All other incidents are diligently recorded. The school has suitable first aid procedures, with three qualified first aiders. It meets all fire safety regulations. Thorough fire risk assessments are undertaken by a commercial company. Fire drills are carried out each term and logged appropriately. All risk areas and potential risk activities of the school are assessed by the responsible member of staff.

The school keeps admission and attendance registers which conform to the regulations. There is purpose-built access to the premises for disabled people. Care has been taken that the new building will meet the requirements of disability legislation.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school undertakes all the necessary checks on staff and proprietors and all checks are recorded carefully in an appropriate set out register.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school moved into its purpose-built accommodation three years ago; it provides a first-class environment for pupils' safe and effective learning. The senior school, used by Years 7 to 13, enables good accessibility and supervision. Attention has been given to ensure that all the areas of the school are bright and well lit. Accommodation provided design and technology and art is currently temporary but nevertheless suitable for purpose, including the essential use of dust extraction in the workshop. The school's own good sports facilities are supplemented by access to the local cricket club grounds, both for cricket and athletics. Accommodation for pupils who become ill is of high quality. Displays areas in both primary and secondary parts of the school are of high quality and support learning. There is a library in each part of the school and these are used well. The new accommodation is appreciated by all and reflects partnership that exists between the community trustees, management, and the teachers. The school is now well embarked in the provision of a two-storey building to re-house the primary department and improve the facilities for art, design technology and the sixth form accommodation.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

PART 6 - The quality of information for parents

The school provides parents with the full range of information required relating to its work, the subjects taught and policies adopted. Examples of the high quality of the care the school takes in informing parents and pupils about its work and life are the very attractive prospectus, the very helpful sixth form course booklet and 'Eduscene', the colour school magazine produced at quarterly intervals through the year. Pupils receive either two reports and one parents' evening visit or one report and two parents' evening visits each academic year supplemented by additional parent/staff meetings and discussions as required. Most parents confirm that they are satisfied with the level of information provided.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has formally adopted the Focus Learning Trust complaints procedures and practices, which are stated in the school prospectus and copied to parents and fully meet the requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

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 includes primary, secondary and sixth form departments and operates an integrated establishment controlled by a Trust with four Chief Education Officers and a total of thirteen Trustees. The Trustees meet every half term, with minutes taken. There is also a senior management committee comprising the head teacher and five other senior staff which meets weekly. The Trustees and head teacher have demonstrated leadership which has successfully led to the amalgamation of several smaller educational establishments into what is now the Linton Park School. They have been instrumental in securing a well-qualified teaching staff committed to working within the Focus Learning Trust ethos and educational guidelines. A strength of the school is that good working relationships have been achieved between the Trustees, the head teacher, staff and the pupils, which creates a happy environment in which all can participate.

The standard of the building provision is excellent, which combines with the working relationships to provide good support for teaching and learning. The school is currently commencing a separate construction project to provide for primary pupils and improved sixth form and technical subjects.

Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?

The Trustees might like to take into consideration the following suggestion as to where specific improvement could be made:

- keep the school improvement plan under review in order to vary priorities as circumstances change and to maintain consistent improvement and attention to detail.

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 School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk