

# 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

<b>Name of school:</b>	Sefton Park School
<b>DfE number:</b> <b>FOCUS number:</b>	825/6037 421
<b>Inspection team:</b>	<b>Reporting Inspector:</b> Peter Jones <b>Supporting Inspectors:</b> Martin Bradley Cecile Corfield <b>Lay Inspector:</b> Philip Hutchinson
<b>Dates of inspection:</b>	11 – 14 October 2010

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## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Sefton Park School	
Address of school:	School Lane, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, SL2 4QA	
Telephone number:	01753 662167	
Fax number:	01753 662168	
Email address:	warren.hughes@focus-school.com	
Name of Chief Executive Officer:	Mr Markham Hearn	
Name of Headteacher:	Mr Warren Hughes	
DfE number:	825/6037	
FOCUS number:	421	
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:	Boys: 55	Girls: 42
(Full time)		
(Part time)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0
Number of post-16 students:	Boys: 17	Girls: 13
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need:	Boys: 1	Girls: 0
Annual fees:	Not applicable	
Type of inspection:	Section 162A of the Education Act 2002	
Inspection Team:		
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Peter Jones	
Supporting Inspectors:	Dr Martin Bradley Mrs Cecile Corfield	
Lay Inspector:	Mr Philip Hutchinson	
Dates of inspection:	11 – 14 October 2010	

## **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 (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 management and ethos and reported on these to the FLT. His findings are summarised in Section C of this document, but this section is not a statutory part of the inspection.

### **Information about the school:**

Sefton Park School is a co-educational independent school registered with the DfE as a school with a special religious character, and is affiliated to the FLT. It provides full-time education for pupils aged from eleven to eighteen years of age who are the children of Brethren families. The Christian ethos, based on the teachings of the Holy Bible, underpins all aspects of school life. The school is linked with two FLT primary schools, one in Reading and one in Harrow, and draws pupils from a wide area of the Home Counties. Sefton Park School is situated in Stoke Poges near Slough. It opened in 2005 in a former village school, built in the 1870s and now a listed building, and has been extended and refurbished. There are currently 97 pupils on roll. The school is controlled by the Fulmer Educational Trust. It has a headteacher and two named Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). The school aims to '*ensure that every learner.....will achieve an outstanding learning experience, regardless of age, ability or background, in a safe and secure environment.*'

### **Summary of main findings:**

Sefton Park School provides a good education which supports effectively the beliefs and values of the school's ethos and aims. The curriculum is good and has been extended recently to meet more closely the needs of the full range of pupils' abilities. Not enough is done to provide careers guidance for older pupils. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Assessment is satisfactory, and procedures introduced this academic year have the potential to provide useful information for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils are keen learners. They show good and constructive attitudes in lessons and make progress which is at least good. They relish the opportunities the school provides for involvement in practical activities such as design and technology, textiles and physical education. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good, and their behaviour is excellent. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Arrangements for safeguarding are good, and the school makes all the necessary checks on staff suitability prior to appointment. Parents are generally very supportive of the school and the education it provides for their children.

### **What the school does well:**

- it provides a positive ethos and ensures that pupils' behaviour is outstanding;

- it ensures that the education pupils receive is good because they are keen learners who are taught well; and
- it extends the curriculum by providing practical and vocational courses for the older pupils.

**What the school must do to comply with the regulations:**

- put in place appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils.

**Next Steps**

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

- provide further opportunities for extended dialogue, discussion and independent research, and
- put in place a more positive rewards system for pupils.

## **SECTION B: COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

### **PART 1 - The quality of education provided by the school**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

Curricular provision throughout the school is good and has been extended recently to meet more closely the needs of the full range of pupils' ability in the school, especially in Key Stage 4 and Post-16.

The curriculum provides effective experiences to enable pupils to make good progress in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, technology, physical and personal development and in aesthetic and creative awareness. At present, the school does not provide a music curriculum, which pupils say that they miss.

The subject matter taught throughout all key stages is appropriate and relevant. It is planned carefully using FLT guidelines, supplemented by documents provided by the school. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught effectively throughout the school. Appropriate provision for PE is made through weekly off-site lessons at Brunel University taught by non-school staff for each year group. Weekly Bible Studies are provided by volunteers. Careers guidance for older pupils is not provided. Throughout the school, resources are adequate and used efficiently, but, at times, the requirements of the curriculum are difficult to fulfil, especially when pupils want to research for up-to-date information. Some pupils express the view that restrictions on the use of memory sticks limits their ability to gather and use relevant information.

In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is taught through National Curriculum subjects. All pupils now do art, design and technology and food and nutrition. Sensible adjustments to the balance of curriculum time have been made, with a slight reduction in time given to English, mathematics and science to provide more time for French, office skills and citizenship.

In Key Stage 4, a broader range of subjects has now been provided for Year 10. This includes Business Studies and Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) Level 2, the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) and a wider range of key skills courses leading to, for example, qualifications in communication or horticulture. The profile of art, textiles and design and technology has been raised to provide practical activities to match pupils' learning needs. The time allocated to English, mathematics and science has been reduced slightly to provide a useful extra option choice in Key Stage 4. All pupils are encouraged to take a vocational course. A business-related course, history, geography and French with vocational pathways are now available. An information and communication technology short course is undertaken in Year 10 which leads to a General Certificate in Secondary Education qualification.

For Post-16 pupils the curriculum has been strengthened to provide more choice. The school provides a reasonable range of Advanced Subsidiary and Year 2 Advanced-level courses in, for example, accounts, art and design, business studies,

chemistry, geography, government and politics, and history. Options now include courses in English for business, French, current affairs and Bible Studies. A useful improvement is that design and technology now offers two City and Guilds courses: one in basic construction and another, a 'multi-craft' course, covering basic skills in, for example, carpentry, plumbing and electrical work. Further options are a FLT certificated textiles course, and a course in food and nutrition. The school strives to provide as many courses as possible, and more are planned for next year, although it acknowledges that choices are governed by the number of pupils and the staffing available.

The school adds variety and value to its curriculum by running whole-school courses on financial awareness, personal well-being and discrimination and disability awareness, when the normal timetable is suspended and pupils work in groups which include all Years. Pupils, parents and teachers are involved in sessions on the development of study skills. Tutor periods provide opportunities for staff and pupils to work together in year groups on personal, social and health education, and to talk about school issues.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and some useful strategies and procedures are in place to further improve the provision. A re-assessment of the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs, with detailed testing of pupils, took place at the end of the last academic year, resulting in a more focused approach to provision for special educational needs. The experienced Facilitator for Learning, who takes on the role of co-ordinating provision for these pupils, works closely with FLT in ensuring that appropriate approved practice is followed. The pupils' individual education plans are carefully devised and checked regularly, and are passed to staff and parents. Termly meetings are planned to keep parents of pupils with special educational needs fully informed. Staff have had appropriate training in provision for special educational needs and more is planned for the near future. One pupil has a statement for special educational needs and is being provided with home tuition.

Provision for the pupils identified as being able, gifted and/or talented is at an early stage of development and follows guidance from the DfE.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding. Teaching enables the pupils to make at least good progress in their academic and vocational subjects and to develop positive attitudes to their learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good throughout the school. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their subjects and convey this interest to pupils very well. Good relationships abound, promoting the pupils' self-confidence, self-awareness and positive attitudes to their learning.

In Key Stage 3, lesson planning is good with clear objectives. Valuable individual support is given and challenging questions are asked to probe pupils' understanding. A brisk pace is maintained in most lessons and pupils are kept on task. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to collaborate and co-operate with each other. Teaching is firm but friendly and mutual respect is evident. In the best lessons, teaching provides challenge for all abilities in interesting activities based on planning

to promote the pupils' achievements. In an exciting science lesson, Year 8 pupils were fully involved in working together in small groups on a challenging experiment on microbes, with the lesson managed effectively to ensure that all carried out the activity to their best ability.

In Key Stage 4, the teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with both pupils and volunteers. Teachers challenge pupils to use their prior knowledge with effective questioning. They are adept at keeping pupils on task and their good knowledge of examination requirements enables them to provide pupils with vital information on how to prepare effectively. Supportive and focused tutorials are provided. In the best lessons in Key Stage 4 the teacher's excellent subject knowledge encouraged very skilfully pupils' deduction and analysis, good concentration and purposeful focus. Good use is made of the internet, despite some restrictions on its access. In some lessons there are not enough opportunities to allow the pupils to express their ideas fully and teachers sometimes continue to talk when pupils want to contribute.

In Post-16 classes, teaching usually encourages pupils to be confident, although some pupils are still reticent in expressing opinions and ideas in discussion. Teachers make analytical comments to assist learning and ask challenging questions to push pupils harder. Lessons have a rapid pace, promoting the pupils' concentration skills and responses and enabling them to tackle new projects. In the best lessons pupils are quickly presented with a challenge and independent thinking is promoted through effective questioning. For example, in a business studies lesson the teacher's high expectations prompted pupils to scrutinise data on 'market share' with perceptive and analytical observations. In a textiles lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge enabled the pupils to produce very good quality work, annotated carefully and presented well.

Assessment is satisfactory, and has been subject to recent review. The early stages of the newly introduced assessment and reporting procedures show that they are beginning to be effective and have the potential to track pupils' progress over time. More use is beginning to be made of fixed assessment cycles, National Curriculum Levels and Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) scores to build up a clearer picture of pupils' progress and improve target setting. Plans for improved reporting to parents are well established for this academic year.

Marking is satisfactory overall, but varies in quality through the school. At its best it provides excellent constructive advice which helps pupils achieve well in examinations. Weaker marking is uninformative and can be untidy.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

*The school meets all the requirements except one.*

***What does the school need to do to comply fully with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- put in place appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (Standard 2 (2)g).

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop a strong sense of their own worth as individuals and as part of a team. Regular celebration assemblies give recognition to good work and behaviour. Pupils work well together in the four houses, encouraging recognition of team effort.

The pupils show good moral development. They clearly distinguish right from wrong, and show respect and consideration for adults and each other. The pupils' social development is good. They are keen and enthusiastic learners who work together well, enjoy their work, and show good and constructive attitudes to their lessons. Their social development is helped by opportunities to participate in collaborative practical activities such as design and technology projects, and they enjoy the out of school educational visits the school is able to arrange, including the valuable link with a school in Hamburg.

Pupils have suitable opportunities to contribute to their school community. The school council, re-established this year, meets half-termly and gives pupils the chance to be represented in decision making on school matters such as common room arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of senior pupils. The school has a head boy, head girl and prefects who have clearly defined roles which they take seriously and fulfil well. Key Stage 4 pupils feel that they could be offered more chances to take on responsibilities.

Pupils contribute to the wider community through fundraising for charities. They organise sponsored events, prepare their own leaflets and posters, and raise substantial funds for charitable organisations. Sixth formers have also taken on the task of editing and producing a termly magazine reflecting the life of the Sefton Park group of schools.

Pupils develop a good awareness of national institutions and services through personal and social education, and through current affairs as well as through outside speakers, including leading political figures. Older pupils make visits to the Houses of Parliament.

The school makes generally good provision to prepare pupils for their future economic well-being through a curriculum which suits their future careers and lifestyles. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on the skills and knowledge pupils will need in the world of business through business-related courses. Skills and knowledge involved in home-making are developed through practical work in design and technology, textiles and food and nutrition.

While sixth form courses are relevant to career choices, careers guidance is lacking. Organisational difficulties mean that sixth formers currently have no work experience. The school is aware that sixth formers would value and benefit from this, and are planning to re-introduce it, as well as a popular school-based tele-marketing scheme. Although older pupils are unfailingly polite and courteous, not all of them have developed the confidence appropriate to their age and ability to engage in extended dialogue or discussion, a skill which is vital to effective communication in the world of work.

The pupils' awareness of the importance of tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions is promoted by projects such as Black History Month, assembly inputs from staff about their own ethnic heritage, and by projects in, for example, art and geography. The school is aware that there is scope to develop further pupils' awareness of other cultures, and curriculum plans for this academic year include whole-school days on cross-cultural themes. Pupils have in the past gained much from participating in music lessons and performances. The absence of music this year is a gap in cultural provision which the school plans to remedy as soon as possible.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **PART 3 - The welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Pupils' welfare is dealt with effectively. The school has appropriate and sensible procedures for monitoring welfare, and maintains a good overview of these. All necessary policies are in place, including those for child protection and safeguarding.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Since the appointment of the headteacher, behaviour policies and systems of discipline have been reviewed. The policy clearly indicates rewards for good behaviour and work as well as sanctions to be used for poor behaviour and work. A merit system recognises success and the marks awarded are allocated to the pupil's house. However, other pupils' demerits occasionally cancel out the rewards.

The school has an anti-bullying policy, and care is taken to ensure that it is applied effectively. The school has successfully sought to deal with any instances of bullying and to address the underlying issues.

Pupils are encouraged to consider ways of staying healthy, and boys and girls have cookery lessons. There is a general awareness of healthy lifestyles; however, PE is allocated three periods a week in a block. For these lessons, pupils travel to a sports centre, but over a third of the time available is spent travelling to and from the centre, reducing the time when pupils can be active.

The school has commissioned its own health and safety review using specialist consultants. The resultant policies are appropriate and useful, although a school-devised addendum document does not clarify that this review and the subsequent actions taken are in place of the FLT documents and procedures.

Fire drills are held regularly and good records are maintained. There are sufficient first aiders. The admission and attendance registers are kept appropriately.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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

Appropriate arrangements are in place for checking staff prior to their appointment, including supply staff, and a single central register records the details of such checks.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **PART 5 - Suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The school is housed in an attractive former village school which has been converted and extended. It is light, airy and well lit, and provides safe and suitable accommodation for pupils' learning. The rooms are of adequate size, and the premises are well cared for and cleaned. The school has made good use of space to create an attractive and welcoming foyer and library area. The school has adequate outdoor playground areas, but does not have its own facilities for PE and games and makes use of local sporting facilities.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **PART 6 - The quality of information for parents**

##### **The quality of information for parents**

The school provides parents and parents of prospective pupils with detailed information about its work, the subjects taught and policies adopted. Through a recently introduced weekly newsletter, parents' forum meetings and regular communications throughout the year, parents are made aware of school activities. Pupils and parents now receive an interim report each half year, with a full report at the end of the academic year. Planned target-setting days at the beginning of each academic year, together with a performance review day early in the spring term, are designed to help parents to gain more detailed awareness of their child's academic performance. Reports on pupils' progress are informative and of good quality. The school handbook has been recently updated to ensure compliance with the regulations.

***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 FLT complaints procedures and practices, and this is made clear in the school handbook which is made available to parents and parents of prospective pupils. The handbook states that a copy of the complaints procedure will be made available on request.

***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 is controlled by the Fulmer Education Trust, which has seven Trustees. Minutes are taken of their meetings, which occur with varying frequency. The school has experienced relatively recent leadership changes in both headteacher and CEO team roles which appear to have enabled it to enter a period of stability. Major changes have been put in place by the headteacher to management and systems which are to the benefit of the school. There is now a clearly defined structure which indicates responsibilities across the school. This aims to ensure both adequate reporting and supervision, leading to a consequent improvement in both education quality and discipline. There is a senior leadership team in the school which meets weekly, together with a fortnightly faculty meeting and regular contact between the headteacher and the senior CEO. The Post-16 department is under the control of the deputy headteacher, and a suitably wide and expanding range of subjects is offered. Trustees have responsibilities that are broadly understood by them, but there is a lack of definition and coverage of their respective functions to ensure consistent compliance with the regulations. The changes at leadership level have now resulted in better reporting and accountability, which together with the introduction of new systems are expected to have beneficial results.

### ***Could the organisation and management of the school be improved?***

The welcome improvements in systems, reporting, general overview and other initiatives instigated by the new headteacher should be continued with the knowledge and involvement of the Trustees. These changes are designed to lead to an improvement in educational provision and the quality of learning. They are appreciated by those involved in the school and they should be developed further.

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

- ensure that Trust meetings are held at more frequent intervals, especially until recent changes have become embedded, and extend minutes of Trust meetings to indicate that matters where an action has been required at a previous meeting are followed up at subsequent meetings;
- more thoroughly detail the individual responsibilities of Trustees, in particular strengthening the role of the Pastoral Care Trustee, to ensure they are clear about the policies and requirements within the scope of their responsibility, ensuring continuing compliance with the regulatory requirements; and

- develop the Trustees' awareness of the financial position of the Trust through regular updates, improving systems and document security to ensure confidentiality for sensitive documents.

**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](http://www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk)**