

Advice note for a pre-registration inspection of a free school

School name	Ascot Road Community Free School
DfE registration number	N/A
Unique reference number (URN)	N/A
Inspection number	446477
Inspection dates	17 June 2014
Reporting inspector	David Young

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Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

Context of the school

Ascot Road Community Free School is to be located in purpose-built new accommodation in West Watford. It will be part of the West Herts Community Free Schools Trust.

The school will provide primary education for up to 420 boys and girls aged four to eleven. The accommodation is currently under construction and is planned for completion in April 2015. The school plans to open in temporary accommodation at Lanchester Community Free School in central Watford, during September 2014. In its first year of operation, it will admit 60 pupils aged four and five years.

The school is not yet operating and the implementation of its policies and procedures could not be seen.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the regulations although implementation could not be seen. The school's policies make a strong commitment to equality and respect for diversity. The community cohesion policy, for example, sets out aims to achieve a common vision and sense of belonging; to ensure that diversity of backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued, and that strong and positive relationships are developed.

The curriculum policy makes a clear commitment to avoid political bias. A 'Values Education Programme' will form part of the curriculum for all pupils. There will be an emphasis from the Early Years curriculum onward, throughout the school, on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, including positive relationships; resilience and enjoyment; personal, social and emotional development and finding out about different people and communities. Pupils will study themes related to national and global communities policy, developing positive attitudes towards life in a multicultural, society and celebrating cultural diversity.

Aspects of the school's personal, social and health education policy will introduce pupils to visitors from the local and wider community, for example, parents and carers will be encouraged to share the festivals which are celebrated within their families. Businesses within the local community have been mapped and links will be developed, for example, with the local branch of the 'Action for Children' charity. A

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/99

'twin school' system is planned to enable pupils to meet and learn from pupils living in a contrasting area of the country. Pupils will gain an insight into the workings of the civil law and of local and national institutions.

Understanding of democratic processes will be encouraged through the election of class and school councils, and pupils will be helped to understand what it means to carry out active roles as citizens. The local college of further education and the local university are partners in the Trust and will play an important part for pupils, from an early age, in raising aspirations and encouraging ambition.

The school plans to provide a multi-faith religious education programme and a curriculum which enhances all aspects of pupils' tolerance and respect for diversity.

The staff handbook places a requirement on staff to handle all sensitive or controversial political themes in a balanced and non-partisan manner.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet the majority of the regulations although implementation could not be seen. All aspects of safeguarding are presented in comprehensive policies. Senior staff have been trained in safer recruitment, and all the required checks are included in recruitment procedures. The safeguarding and child protection policies set out robust procedures to ensure the well-being and safety of pupils. The headteacher and an additional member of staff have been trained to the required level in child protection and suitable plans are in place for the training of all staff in child protection and fire safety during their induction so that requirements are likely to be met.

Appropriate policies are in place to support the staff with the management of behaviour, the prevention of bullying and the organisation of off-site visits. Suitable rewards and sanctions are identified in the behaviour policy. The school's electronic information management system provides the facility to maintain records of serious incidents and related sanctions, to record admissions and attendance suitably and to monitor staff training requirements.

The health and safety policy defines appropriate responsibilities, including fire and emergency procedures. The information management system includes the facility to record all required routine checks on fire safety equipment. Appropriate arrangements for first aid and accident reporting are set out in the first aid and medication policy which also identifies a named member of staff to take lead responsibility for first aid. Additional training, including paediatric first aid is included in the planned induction arrangements for staff.

As the school's accommodation has not yet been completed, no fire risk assessment has been completed and no firm arrangement has been made for this, the building control certificate is not yet available and no disability access plan has been prepared.

In order to meet the regulations in full, the school should:

- prepare a fire risk assessment and ensure that the school's building standards compliance certificate is obtained on completion of the refurbishment work (paragraph 13)
- produce an accessibility plan in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all the regulations. All required checks on the suitability of the proprietors, governors and staff are being completed as appointments are made. A suitable single central register of checks has been constructed and details of all checks, including enhanced disclosures from the disclosure and barring service, are being entered. The school is aware of the required checks to be made on supply staff should they be employed.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the regulations. It is to be located in purpose-built new accommodation at Ascot Road in West Watford. Work on this permanent accommodation is still at site-preparation stage. This work is not due for completion until April 2015.

The Trust is also establishing another new free school at a site in central Watford known as the 'Lanchester site' (which is the subject of another application for registration). The proposed Ascot Road School aims to admit 60 pupils aged four and five years in September 2014, and to accommodate them temporarily in these premises at the Lanchester site. The Lanchester site consists of a large building previously used as a further education college. It is currently undergoing extensive refurbishment. This refurbishment is due for completion and the building should be available for occupation by mid-September 2014.

Suitable plans have been prepared for both the Lanchester and West Watford sites which, if implemented in full, should ensure that all the regulatory requirements are met. Plans for the premises and accommodation at both sites were scrutinised and discussed with the headteacher and the Trust's project director. The plans demonstrate compliance with all the independent school regulations for premises and accommodation. There will be sufficient classroom space for the planned number on roll, appropriately structured to meet the needs of pupils across the full age range. In addition, the plans for both sites include an assembly hall and space for indoor games and physical education. All requirements for toilets, water supply including labelled drinking water, a medical room and securely-fenced boundaries are included in these plans.

The Education Funding Agency, the Department's delivery agent, is managing the preparation and refurbishment process on behalf of the academy. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the Agency.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. The school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement in relation to the following matters:**

- prepare a fire risk assessment and ensure that the school's building standards compliance certificate is obtained on completion of the refurbishment work (paragraph 13)
- produce an accessibility plan in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

If registration is recommended, please state:

Recommended number of day pupils: 420
Recommended number of boarders: n/a
Recommended age range: 4–11 years
Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed
Recommended type of special educational needs: n/a.