

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

School name	The Aspire Academy
DfE registration number	999/1640
Unique reference number (URN)	1640
Inspection number	446712
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Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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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

The proprietor, The Aspire Academy Free School, seeks to establish a free school for up to 120 male and female students aged 11 to 16 years in Worcester. The school will occupy converted office and workshop premises near Junction 6 of the M5 motorway on the north-eastern boundary of the city. Conversion of the premises started on 10 June 2014 and is likely to be completed in August 2014. The school plans to open on 8 September 2014 with 60 students, with a target of 90 students in its first year.

The school will provide a range of short- and long-term part-time and full-time courses for students from south Worcestershire who are excluded or at risk of exclusion from their mainstream secondary schools. Academy staff will also provide support for students in their own mainstream schools. The academy has established a partnership with the nearby Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club to support its provision for students' personal development and fitness. The Warriors stadium is within easy traffic-free walking distance.

The school aims to 'provide a personalised curriculum which meets individual need and allows each of our pupils to grow and develop at their own pace, experiencing success on a regular basis in order that self-confidence can flourish and their academic progress and post-16 destinations will be what they are capable of achieving'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The proposed provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriate for the age range of the students and reflects the school's aims. The school has drawn up a comprehensive programme of enrichment to promote students' personal, social and

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

health education through the taught curriculum, extra-curricular activities and individual support.

The school's proposed programme focuses on raising students' confidence and self-esteem so as to enable them to continue in full-time education and training and prepare for their future lives in society and in the workplace. Central to this is the school's focus on developing students' self-respect, understanding and tolerance of others and their cultures, beliefs and differences, and promoting healthy relationships. The school's policies and procedures promote high expectations of students' behaviour. Students will be supported in valuing themselves as individuals; in developing their ability to work and take part in social and sporting activities with others; to make the right decisions when faced with difficult dilemmas and to have the confidence to learn from their mistakes. Students' cultural development will be promoted through specialist art and music provision, visits and visitors. The school's plans include helping students to understand their rights and responsibilities within a democratic society, leading healthy and safe lives, and developing a healthy set of values and attitudes within a clear moral code. Students will develop a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in England, and of the civil and criminal law, through the life skills and citizenship provision.

The school has taken suitable steps to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject and, where political issues are brought to the attention of the students, that reasonable steps will be taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views at all times. Guidance is provided in the staff handbook and curriculum policy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance provided by the Secretary of State; it includes specific references to the local safeguarding board. The policy provides clear guidance to staff, governors and others about recognising and reporting abuse. The headteacher and deputy headteacher designate have already undertaken higher level child protection training; the designated person for children protection is due to undertake the higher level training before the school opens. All staff will be provided with appropriate training in safeguarding matters as part of their induction programme prior to the first students being admitted so that requirements are likely to be met. The headteacher-designate and others involved in appointing staff have completed recognised training courses in safe recruitment procedures. The school has a suitable policy and procedures for recruiting staff. All the required checks are being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body as they are appointed, and the single central register is being populated as these checks are completed.

The school's policies for promoting students' good behaviour, preventing bullying and ensuring their health and safety, both in school and when on visits, meet

requirements. Suitable and secure records will be maintained of the sanctions imposed on students for serious misbehaviour. The first aid policy provides appropriate guidance and it is firmly planned to train named staff in first aid procedures before the school opens. The school will use a computerised database to provide admission and attendance registers that reflect requirements.

Work on the school's premises is scheduled to be completed in August 2014. The proprietor has arranged for a fire risk assessment to be made as soon as the accommodation is handed over by the contractors. The proprietor has made contingency plans to deal with any required actions or recommendations before the school opens. The proprietor has also made firm arrangements to provide the Department for Education with copies of the contractor's handover certificate, building regulations certificate and fire risk assessment. These actions are likely to meet requirements. The school has due regard to the Equality Act 2010, with an action plan drawn up to ensure access to the premises, the curriculum and to information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. All the required checks are being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body, including their suitability for working with children, as they are appointed. These are being suitably recorded on the school's single central register. The school's records of the checks made on the identity and qualifications (where required) of staff, together with their medical fitness and any other checks, are complete for those already in post and are in the process of being completed for others as they are appointed. The school obtains and checks written references on all applicants in line with safe recruitment guidelines. The school does not intend to employ staff through an agency but is aware of the procedures to be followed should this be necessary.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. A site visit was undertaken as part of this inspection visit and discussions held with the project manager. The headteacher has worked closely with the design team to ensure that the accommodation is well suited to the needs of students. Leaders demonstrated a robust appreciation of risk and understanding of health and safety procedures during a lengthy discussion with the project manager concerning the fire exit route from the first floor to the fire assembly point on the ground floor (which was judged suitable). The plans for the accommodation provide a mix of teaching rooms, suited to small groups and individuals. There will be specialist facilities to support the curriculum, including computer stations, music suite, art studio and a motor mechanics/construction workshop. All teaching rooms will have access to computer facilities. There is a servery with two dining areas, one of which will be available to students who have a fear of larger spaces. There will a secure reception area and

offices for leaders, teaching staff and administrators. The school has ordered furnishing and equipment and these are awaiting delivery for when the first students arrive in September. Mains services are connected and operational. The maintenance of the premises, and the arrangements for keeping them clean and tidy, have been arranged and appropriate standards of decoration, internal and external lighting, ventilation, heating and flooring are specified. The local fire officer has been consulted over the school's plans and is due to visit when the conversion work is completed and before the first students arrive.

The school's plans indicate that all the requirements regarding hot and cold water supplies are likely to be met. The washroom facilities for students and staff are already in place and are sufficient for the number of students sought. There will be suitable washroom facilities for disabled people and appropriately equipped medical facilities for students. The facilities for physical education and games at the Worcester Warriors Stadium include separate changing room facilities and showers. The school has retained two shower rooms already installed in the washrooms to be used by students and is providing laundry facilities to support students' personal care and development.

The security of the buildings and grounds is likely to meet requirements. The site is being fenced and gated to provide a secure area for students' recreation and play. Plans include separate entrances for students and for visitors and deliveries.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. This school is likely to meet all regulations when it opens and is recommended for registration.**

Recommended number of day pupils: 120

Recommended number of boarders: N/A

Recommended age range: 11–16 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed.

Recommended type of special educational needs: Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties