

Advice note for pre-registration inspections of free schools

School name	City of Peterborough Academy Special School
DfE registration number	999/1242
Unique reference number (URN)	1242
Inspection number	403961
Inspection dates	27 June 2012
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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Context of the school

City of Peterborough Academy Special School is located on the edge of Peterborough. As a new free school, it wishes to admit up to 90 pupils aged 4 to 18 years. It is sponsored by the Greenwood Trust who are also sponsors of another free school, the City of Peterborough Academy. The Academy Special School will specialise in meeting the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The chief executive officer of the Greenwood Trust is the Chair of the special school's Governing Body.

The school will open in September 2012, with 50 pupils aged 4 to 12 on roll, in refurbished buildings. In June 2013, it will move to newly constructed premises on the same site. It will also have access to some specialist facilities, such as sports facilities and to inclusion opportunities, within the City of Peterborough Academy when this opens in September 2013. Almost all pupils who are admitted to the school will have a statement of special educational needs. A small number will be given assessment places while undergoing the statutory assessment process.

The school's accommodation is currently being converted from buildings which have had a variety of educational uses. It is surrounded by playing fields and courtyards which it will share with the mainstream academy.

The academy's vision is 'to provide a range of learning environments carefully planned in order to give each pupil the best learning potential.' This includes identifying the 'unique needs, difficulties and learning skills of each pupil and supporting each to overcome barriers to learning.'

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

All regulations are likely to be met, although implementation could not be seen. The school's aims and values, together with its curriculum overview, are highly focused on personal development and on enabling each pupil's special educational needs to be met. This includes enabling them to become more self-aware and develop a range of social skills. An emphasis on social communication, self-expression, making choices, generalising skills and enabling pupils to become as independent as possible puts pupils' personal development at the centre of its work. Community involvement and inclusion opportunities, as well as work experience and preparation for adulthood, offer strong support for pupils' understanding of citizenship and encourage personal responsibility and teamwork. There are suitable plans in place for promoting their understanding of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the local community and in the wider world.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

All regulations, except one, are likely to be met. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The school has already established detailed procedures for keeping pupils' safe and promoting their wellbeing, including ensuring students are safe on educational visits. The safeguarding policy contains all the required information and the designated person for child protection has been trained to the appropriate level. All staff will have up-to-date training in child protection and a high percentage will receive first aid training, including paediatric first aid training, before the school opens.

Safe recruitment procedures are meticulously followed and all the required checks are carried out prior to staff taking up appointments and recorded appropriately. A three-year access improvement plan is in place and an equal opportunities statement that meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. However, although a behaviour policy has been drawn up, this is adapted from a general Greenwood Trust document; it does not sufficiently take account of pupils' special educational needs and any individual behaviour plans that might be put into place. The anti-bullying policy makes clear that bullying of any form will not be tolerated and how incidents will be dealt with if they arise.

The building is not yet complete but is ahead of schedule. The appropriate fire risk assessments are scheduled to take place so that requirements will be met. Evacuation procedures are clear and well thought through, particularly as to how pupils will be enabled to take part in fire drills and practice evacuations without anxiety and as quickly as possible.

The school has identified appropriate procedures for the completion of attendance and admission registers, for which an electronic system is in the process of being installed.

In summary:

- The behaviour policy and related sanctions and approaches to behaviour management, including the promotion of good behaviour, are based on a general Greenwood Trust behaviour policy and do not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (paragraph 9).

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All the regulations are likely to be met. All the required checks are in place, and these are recorded on the academy's single central register. These include the checks relating to staff's identify, medical fitness, qualifications and right to work in the United Kingdom. The Chair of the Governing Body has been checked by the Department for Education and has undertaken checks on other members of the proprietorial body, as required.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

All regulations are likely to be met. The building is light and spacious and classrooms are of a good size. There will be a good range of facilities available in the new buildings, including specialist teaching rooms. The temporary base until June 2013 includes on site facilities for physical education and a separate dining room. Outdoor facilities are suitable for safe play, including those for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Plans take good account of pupils' therapy and other needs and include a sensory room. Careful thought has been given to screening the building site so that the school's day-to-day operation and pupils' learning are not disrupted.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision meets all 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:**
 - submission of the school's amended behaviour policy, which takes more account of pupils' special educational needs and makes clear the sanctions and behaviour management approaches that will be adopted (paragraph 9).

Recommended number of day pupils: 90

Recommended number of boarders or residential pupils (if applicable): N/A

Recommended age range: 4–18

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Autistic spectrum disorders