

Advice note for pre-registration inspections of free schools

School name	Stone Soup Learns Academy
DfE registration number	999/1285
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Reporting inspector	David Young

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Context of the school

Stone Soup Learns Academy is to be located within the City of Nottingham. It is sponsored by the Stone Soup Academy Trust. The academy will be registered as an alternative provision free school for up to 100 students in the age range 11 to 19 years. It will open on 4 September 2012 with an anticipated intake of approximately 10 students. The students admitted will have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and most will remain on the roll of their host schools. The academy is to be located in converted commercial premises which are currently in the process of refurbishment, to be completed by January 2013. In the meantime, the academy will occupy temporary leased premises in a community centre which was originally built as a school. The academy 'believes that every young person has the opportunity to succeed by being motivated and inspired rather than contained'. It aims to develop young people into unique, responsible, receptive, discerning human beings with a sense of their own value'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that all regulations are likely to be met but implementation could not be seen. The school's policy for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE), which is linked to the statutory guidance for citizenship, provides the basis for students' personal development. This policy and teaching programme is committed to developing confidence and responsibility, developing good relationships, and respecting differences between people. The plans include a number of opportunities for students to take responsibility, for example, through public performances, leading an assembly, or researching local opportunities for education in healthy lifestyles. The programme ensures that students will encounter moral dilemmas, make real choices and prepare for change. The academy will ensure that students are supported in developing their self-confidence, understanding the difference between right and wrong, and developing strategies to ensure their own emotional and physical well-being. Themes to be taught in PSHEE and in religious education will encourage reflection and understanding of how societies operate effectively, and will enable students to reassess their own values, codes and principles. Specific approaches to learning include, for example, drawing from a range of religious and cultural experiences, showing responsibility for their own actions, exploration and analysis of cultural venues and experiences, and working with other communities. The school has firm plans to produce an 'Everyone Matters' calendar which identifies themes, festivals, and projects which will underpin a weekly programme of cultural and multi-cultural awareness. The school's documentation demonstrates a suitable commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that all regulations are likely to be met but implementation could not be seen. The school's policy for safeguarding and student welfare identifies that the headteacher is the designated person for child protection. He has completed level 1 training and a place has been booked for attendance at a suitable level 3 training course early in September 2012. The policy also covers the management of disclosures, managing referrals, managing allegations against staff, and it includes appropriate arrangements for the recruitment of staff. Firm arrangements are in place for updated child protection training, and first-aid training as part of staff induction in late August. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide sufficient guidelines to ensure that staff take a consistent approach to the management of students. The policies include a commitment to a positive, rewards-based system while also setting out sanctions for misbehaviour. Policies and procedures for off-site visits and for administration of first aid take appropriate account of the Department for Education's guidance; at least one senior member of staff is trained to the required level for first aid. Health and safety arrangements for the temporary premises are covered by a facilities agreement with the charitable trust which oversees these. There is a suitable fire risk assessment in place and evidence has been seen of regular, routine checks on all fire safety equipment. Fire evacuation arrangements have been agreed. There are a small number of health and safety risks in the fabric of the building which are easily remedied; the academy must seek assurances that these matters will be addressed before it occupies the premises. Spreadsheets have been created to record the admission and attendance registers. Once the academy moves to its permanent site, an electronic management information system will be installed.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school's planning for the completion of all required checks on the suitability of staff, and their implementation to date, indicate that all regulations are likely to be met. The academy's written policy and procedures include requirements for all statutory checks to be completed on the suitability of staff and governors. Those already completed are entered on a suitable single central register; this is continuously updated as checks are completed.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. The planned permanent building was previously a commercial premises in the heart of the city which is currently being refurbished to provide suitable accommodation for the school. The plans for the building include sufficient teaching spaces, including specialist areas for hairdressing, information and communication technology (ICT), art, catering and performing arts. In addition, there are general teaching spaces which provide for flexible use across general subjects and vocational studies. The premises are arranged over three floors with an additional basement space for a recording studio. There are sufficient washrooms for students and staff, and a room

to be used by any student who may become ill. There is a courtyard area on the ground floor which provides appropriate space for play and recreation. The school will also have access to additional sports facilities on the site of the temporary premises. The refurbishment is likely to be completed, with occupation by the school, in January 2013. The refurbishment is being managed by the Department's delivery agent, the Funding Agency for Schools, which will be able to provide monitoring reports on progress with the refurbishment.

The temporary managed premises, available for immediate occupation, are located in a community centre approximately two miles from the permanent building. This accommodation provides sufficient teaching space for up to 25 students. It includes general teaching spaces for general subjects, art and ICT, together with a recording studio adjacent to the ICT suite. In addition, there are two large halls; one equipped as a sports hall and the other as a performance hall. There is a small kitchen area where food can be prepared ready for serving in the sports hall. There are sufficient washrooms and a suitable room identified for use by any student who may become ill. These premises are leased under a facilities management contract to the charitable trust which has proposed the new school. The premises are maintained in a satisfactory condition, although a health and safety audit is required to attend to minor maintenance issues before occupation by students. There is adequate outside space for play and recreation, and a sports barn on site, available for student use. Subject to the preparation of a health and safety audit and completion of any necessary remedial work, these premises are suitable for temporary occupation.

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

Is registration recommended?

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

- the academy must complete a premises health and safety audit for the temporary Sycamore Centre site and complete any repair work which is required to meet regulatory requirements (paragraph 11)

- the academy must ensure that all areas of the temporary Sycamore Centre site are maintained and decorated to a satisfactory standard (paragraph 23(p))
- the academy must ensure that any areas of loose floor covering at the temporary Sycamore Centre site are repaired (paragraph 23(r)).

Recommended number of day pupils: 100 (25 in temporary accommodation at the Sycamore Centre)

Recommended age range: 11–19 years

Recommended gender of pupils: mixed

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

The temporary accommodation at the Sycamore Centre is suitable for up to 25 students.