

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

School name	Discovery New School
DfE registration number	Not yet assigned
Unique reference number (URN)	Not yet assigned
Inspection number	384738
Inspection dates	3 August 2011
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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Context of the school

Discovery New School is a proposed non-denominational mixed free school situated on the outskirts of Crawley, West Sussex. It plans to open on 1 September 2011. It is housed in a Grade 2 listed building that has needed extensive renovation. In the long term, there will be places for 112 pupils aged from four to eleven. The school will open with forty eight pupils aged from four to nine. It plans to expand the age groups and numbers over the next five years to its full complement. The school expects to admit a small proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, particularly those with specific learning difficulties, autism, speech, language and/or communication needs. Its stated ethos is based on Montessori principles.

Three class teachers have already been appointed, all of whom have a degree, qualified teacher status and/or Montessori qualifications. An associate teacher with a Montessori qualification has also been appointed. Three posts for teaching assistants and other support and administrative staff are soon to be appointed.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The requirements of this standard are likely to be met, subject to satisfactory implementation through the planned curriculum. The Montessori philosophy underpins the curriculum and is intended to develop the pupils' innate curiosity and thus encourage interest in learning. The planned provision emphasises that by presenting children with the right environment and materials they can progress, learn to be self-motivated and independent and grow in self-confidence. The curricular planning also provides structured pathways to develop an understanding of different faiths, cultures and traditions. Pupils will be encouraged to develop an understanding of the diverse society in which they live by making use of annual local community celebrations. The school expects to make extensive use of the local environment to help pupils better understand how our many public bodies work and to then closely link these within various subject and activity areas.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Implementation could not be seen, but it is likely that all regulations with regard to the welfare, health and safety of the pupils will be met. The preparatory work to ensure the safety of pupils is in place for the school's opening. There are comprehensive policies, in line with the latest DfE guidance, that cover all requirements including safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and admissions. A member of staff has received appropriate training as the school's child protection officer and all other staff will be trained before the school opens. The school has already formed a health and safety committee and has a dedicated health and safety officer. The proprietorial body have been diligent in ensuring that fire safety checks take place both before and after the school opens to ensure that pupils are not put

at risk. The first-aid room, presently under construction, will be conveniently situated in the centre of the building. In light of the school's aim of providing pupils the means to develop their independence, a system of computer and internet safety scrutiny is being installed, along with child-safe software. This is aimed at ensuring pupils can integrate their use of technological hardware seamlessly within other areas of study. The premises are being adapted to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and a three-year plan is being drafted to improve access, as required. Currently the attendance and admission registers are blank, but their format meets requirements.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Safeguarding checks have already been completed on staff who have been appointed, as well as for members of the governing body. Despite a number of requests, the school is still awaiting the relevant formal documentation from the DfE to complete the single central record (SCR) but has checked with the Department to ensure that there are no issues to follow up. Systems are in place to vet all temporary or supply staff as the need arises. The SCR also contains sections for volunteers, contractors and parents in readiness for the school's opening. The procedures in place are likely to meet requirements.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

All regulations with regard to the building are likely to be met. The building work is still in process but is on schedule to be completed by the middle of August. From then, the staff will have time to fit out each classroom ready for the start of term. The proprietorial body has been in close liaison with the contractors and other specialists throughout to ensure that all the necessary Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 are adhered to. There has been some structural renovation, but most of the individual rooms are now close to being completed. Security and safety have been of prime importance and much of this has been done in sympathy with the age, character and expected use of the building. For example, reinforced glass rather than steel bars is being used to form a safety barrier on low windows and on the gallery so that the open and airy feel of the building will make it more conducive to pupils' learning and independence. There is good wheelchair and disabled access and facilities on the ground floor and the school plans to extend this to other floors if the need arises. Toilet facilities will follow the guidance as minor amendments are being made to separate the girls and boys areas more effectively. The playground is still under construction but will also include an enclosed, covered and separate space for the youngest children.

Provision of information

The school website contains comprehensive information for parents as required and when the school is open this is planned to be extended to provide easily accessible hard copies or the use of a dedicated computer by parents and carers. The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Policies, procedures and systems are in place that include clear indications of how parents or others should contact the school. While the systems have not been tested, the school has taken good advice in producing the paperwork. The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

Is registration recommended?

YES

For number of day pupils: 112

For number of boarders: N/A

For age range: 4–11 years

For gender of pupils: Mixed