

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

School name	The Free School Norwich
DfE registration number	999/1085
Unique reference number (URN)	1085
Inspection number	384319
Inspection dates	18 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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Context of the school

The Free School Norwich is located in the centre of the city with good access to local amenities and public transport. As a new free school, it wishes to provide full-time education for pupils aged four to 11 years from across the county of Norfolk and after-school care provision, known as 'The Squirrels', for 51 weeks per year. The school is directly funded by the Department for Education, with the provision for 51 week after-school care being sponsored by the local business community.

The school will open in September 2011. It is accommodated in a large listed Georgian building, which was formerly used as an office building and is currently in the final stages of refurbishment. The free school hopes to admit up to 168 pupils and there are currently 96 pupils on roll, including 22 in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The free school has a clearly-defined ethos of opportunity and achievement for all. The school regards itself as a dyslexia-friendly school with specialist facilities and staff trained in dyslexia support. Reflecting its ethos, the school also intends to provide for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities including: mild sensory impairments; behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties; and mild autism. The free school's focus will be on teaching that is innovative, with learning enhanced by a wide range of planned activities within the local area.

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 as the school is not yet operating. The school's strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development and learning are central to all areas of its work, and are reflected in clear policies to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The planned widespread use of local facilities to provide enriched learning opportunities strongly supports the cohesiveness of the community. The well-conceived behaviour policy and code of conduct sets out high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Many opportunities are planned for pupils to make a positive contribution by showing initiative and by taking on responsibility in the school, such as hosting the reception area when visitors arrive. The school places significant importance on promoting equality and developing pupils' understanding and appreciation of diversity through, for example, its planned themed topics on festivals, celebrations and planned visits to local theatres and the 'Forum', the city information and cultural centre.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

All the regulations are likely to be met although implementation was not seen as the school is not yet operating. The policies and procedures to promote the safety and well-being of pupils are robust. All staff have been suitably trained in safeguarding procedures and the necessary checks made on their suitability to work with children, according to the school's policy on safer recruitment. The school has also established firm links with the local safeguarding children board through the designated person for child protection, who is the headteacher. Opportunities to promote pupils' safety are also identified within the curriculum. There are clear policies to manage pupils' behaviour, supported by a variety of rewards and sanctions. The anti-bullying policy provides useful guidance to staff on dealing with any potential bullying and clearly shows that bullying will not be tolerated. There are clear procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety on educational visits and all areas of the school have been assessed for potential risk. Health and safety checks will be monitored regularly by the governing body and the site manager. Fire risk assessments and protocols for the regular checking of fire and electrical appliances are in place. The first aid policy meets requirements with a number of first aiders identified and provides clear guidance on how to deal with spillages of bodily fluids. A three-year access plan is in place which meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school has an appropriate electronic system in place for the completion of attendance and admissions registers.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All the regulations are likely to be met. All staff, governors and proprietors have been subject to enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks and suitable arrangements have been made to ensure the suitability of supply or agency staff. The recommended checks made on staff, visitors, governors, proprietors and supply staff not employed by the school are accurately recorded on a single central register. This also indicates who made the checks and the date they were recorded.

Premises and accommodation of schools

All the regulations are likely to be met. The newly refurbished building is light, airy, spacious and decorated to a high standard. Classroom accommodation is well designed, with an open-plan arrangement for pupils at Key Stage 1 and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage on the ground floor, and dedicated classrooms for pupils at Key Stage 2 on the first floor. Classrooms are well resourced with computers and interactive whiteboards, and there is good access to a designated outdoor learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are sufficient washrooms for pupils, staff and visitors, and a designated medical room where pupils can go if they feel ill. The outdoor recreational space, although relatively small, is well designed and meets requirements because the school intends to provide staggered recreational times. In addition, all pupils will benefit from a planned weekly visit to leisure facilities provided by Norwich Football Club. The accommodation for the 'Squirrels' after-school care provision, which is housed on the

ground floor separately from the classroom provision, will provide well-resourced spacious recreational areas.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures are likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

Is registration recommended? **YES**

For number of day pupils: 168

For number of boarders: 0

For age range: 4–11

For gender of pupils: Mixed