

Advice note for a pre-registration inspection of an academy/free school/studio school/university technical college (UTC)

School name	Sir Thomas Fremantle Free School
DfE registration number	N/A
Unique reference number (URN)	1464
Inspection number	422369
Inspection dates	11 July 2013
Reporting inspector	Caroline Bolton

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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

It is proposed to open the Sir Thomas Fremantle Free School in the small north Buckinghamshire town of Winslow. The movement to set up a free school in the area was started by a steering group of local parents, teachers and education professionals. The intended location is in a section of a building which previously housed a school and which is shared with an adult education centre. There are plans to move after two years to newly-built accommodation on another local site. The school is to be small, non-selective and without any religious affiliation. For the first year, pupils are to be admitted in Years 7 and 8 only, with a longer-term aim of 11-19 provision for 420 pupils. To date, 100 pupils are registered for enrolment. The roll will include pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs. The vision is for a school which has 'an ethos that thrives on trust and mutual respect. It will be a forgiving, secure and inspirational place which promotes confidence, humility and success'. 'We aim to be a school with an innovative, intellectually challenging curriculum.'

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

It is likely that the school will meet all the regulations, although implementation could not be seen. There is an emphasis in planning for the new school on pupils gaining in confidence and taking responsibility, for example as leaders in sport and as elected representatives of their peers with a voice in school policy making. The Climate for Learning policy makes clear the school's expectations of positive behaviour and that pupils are expected to be responsible for their own conduct. Close relationships and cooperation with the local community are emphasised through the curriculum, which has core, enrichment and community strands, the last of which involves service to the community, as well as gaining understanding of how communities work. The school has already established links with a local special school, which presently makes use of some of its intended facilities.

Daily enrichment sessions of an hour are planned to give pupils opportunities to develop personal interests, for example in dance, music, drama, sport, crafts and local history. Cultural development will be enhanced through visits to places of interest, for example the nearby Bletchley Park, and through an annual residential trip to be available to all pupils. Moral and social development, including respect for

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

different beliefs and cultural heritages, is to be fostered through the personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) programme, assemblies and across all areas of the curriculum. It is intended to deliver aspects of citizenship education through PSHCE and humanities. These will ensure that pupils gain an insight into the civil law and the workings of English public institutions. The school intends to provide daily assemblies as a key element of its provision for spiritual development and has already developed links with the local church. From applications received so far, the intake is largely mono-cultural, but different faiths are nevertheless likely to be represented and the school is committed to promoting tolerance and understanding between groups and individuals. Food to be provided for pupils will, for example, reflect the dietary requirements of a range of faith groups. There is no indication from the curriculum documents or from other planning that any biased political view will be promoted or tolerated in teaching or in other activities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

All requirements are likely to be met, although policies could not be seen in implementation. There are suitable policies on health and safety, child protection and safeguarding, safer recruitment, educational visits, drugs and alcohol abuse, smoking, first aid, use of the internet and sex education. There are detailed policies to deal with bullying of pupils and, separately, harassment of staff. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are scheduled to be trained for the role of designated persons for safeguarding before the school opens, while the rest of the staff are due to receive on-line training in safeguarding within the induction days to take place before the school opens to pupils so that requirements are likely to be met.

The first aid policy covers most of the requirements, including provision for a suitable number of trained first aiders and a room for sick or injured individuals, but it does not make it clear to staff when an emergency ambulance or a journey to hospital is needed, or what to do if blood or other bodily fluids are spilled. The policy is not clear about informing parents of any medical incidents involving their children. There are sufficient members of staff trained in first aid. It is planned that electronic registers will let subject, as well as form, teachers know of any pupils with medical conditions for which action or extra vigilance may be needed.

Extensive refurbishment of the accommodation is ongoing and a visit from a consultant with expertise in fire safety has been booked to visit the school once it is completed. A fire risk assessment will then be completed and the first fire drill is planned for an early stage of the new term. A fire authority report is planned, but there is no date set for this. Clear guidance is provided in the health and safety policy for the writing and timely revision of risk assessments more generally, although they could not be completed at the time of this inspection visit as the building work was not complete. The building is shared with adult education provision and the school is aware of the potential safeguarding issues which arise. The school's side of the building can be closed off by locking internal doors, but the exterior is more difficult. There are extensive grounds, but, although it is clear which outside areas belong to each establishment, there is potential for straying beyond

bounds by individuals or groups. The school needs to set up clearer signs and physical boundaries to prevent unsupervised contact between adults and pupils. The areas in which cars move and park also need to be more clearly separated from the routes pupils use to enter and leave the premises. Occasionally, local people walk their dogs in the playing field area and more should be done to prevent this potential hazard to pupils' health and safety. The path to one of the playing fields is between uncultivated spaces with thick and tall nettle growth on either side. The path is quite wide enough for pupils to pass sensibly without making contact with the nettles but it was agreed with the headteacher that a reminder sign would be helpful.

There are arrangements to enable disabled students to have access to all areas of the school, the accommodation for which is all at ground floor level. One pupil likely to begin at the school in September 2013 is a wheelchair user and has already visited the premises to check that access and facilities will be appropriate. The school has yet to prepare a three-year plan to improve access.

In order to meet the regulations in full, the school should:

- review health and safety arrangements for the outside areas of the school and ensure that there is no unsupervised contact between adults external to the school, that pupils are safe from traffic as they move around the site, that the playing field is safe and ensure that all risk assessments are completed before the school opens (paragraph 7)
- complete the fire risk assessment and obtain a report from the fire authority so as to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13)
- review and revise the first aid policy to ensure all requirements are fully met (paragraph 14)
- prepare a three-year plan to improve access in order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All requirements are likely to be met. Staff recruitment is continuing and there are clear systems for carrying out checks on each individual following his/her appointment. The single central register exists in electronic form and is being completed with relevant information about staff, as well as governors. Almost all staff are directly employed by the school and the record shows that their identities, qualifications and medical fitness have been verified. Checks have also been made with the Disclosure Banning Service and against List 99. There is no intention at present to employ supply staff, but the school is aware of its responsibilities if the situation changes. The headteacher is also aware of the nature of incidents that would need to be reported to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The site manager is not directly employed by the school but by the county council. The appropriate checks have been made and recorded.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is to be housed for its first two years in a building shared with an adult education centre run by Buckinghamshire County Council. The school accommodation is on one side of the building and was formerly in use as school provision. Works are therefore largely refurbishment rather than fresh building, but extensive internal modifications are under way to provide, for example, showers for pupils, new toilets, offices and a specialist shared science and design and technology room. The inspector was able to tour the site, although completion is some weeks away and the classroom furniture was not yet installed. It is planned that the school accommodation will be made secure and inaccessible from the adult learning side by internal locks. The main external entrance to the school will be open for pupils at the start of sessions but, thereafter, is to be secured by swipe cards issued to staff. A release button will enable the door to be opened quickly from the inside in an emergency.

Pupils will be admitted to Years 7 and 8 only for the first year of operation and the applications so far indicate that the roll in that period will be in the region of 100. Year 7 is predicted to be full, but there is spare capacity in Year 8. The classroom accommodation is adequate for the likely numbers, although there is limited space overall. There is a staff working room, for example, but there is not enough space for a social area. The music room is not part of the regular school accommodation; it is in another part of the building, a short distance away, and has been booked by the school for lessons at specified times. A room has been designated as a rest area for sick children, it is close to toilet facilities and next to the headteacher's office.

The school has the use of two sports fields on the site and external space is attractive and generous in size. There is a secure quadrangle for use as a recreational area. However, aspects of safety in the external areas need to be addressed and they are outlined in the welfare, health and safety section of this note.

In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should:

- ensure the playing field is safe for pupils' use for physical education (paragraph 23G(1)(a))
- ensure the playing field is safe for pupils' use for recreation (paragraph 23G(1)(b)).

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to meet almost all the regulations. However, the policy does not include clear information about the intended timescales for handling complaints; at present it includes only the timescale for the initial response. It is not clear about

the process for handling informal complaints. The policy makes clear the requirement to notify complainants of the outcomes of the process but does not make the same provision for any person who has been the subject of a complaint.

In order to meet the regulations in full, the school should:

- ensure that the complaints policy is clear about intended timescales for dealing with complaints (paragraph 25(c))
- make clear the procedure for dealing with complaints at an informal stage (paragraph 25(d))
- include the requirement in the policy to notify anyone who has been the subject of a complaint about the outcome (paragraph 25(i)).

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

YES. This school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement in relation to the matters detailed above.

Recommended number of day pupils: 420

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11–19 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Not applicable.

Note: The Department should obtain confirmation from the school before it opens that the planned risk assessments and building works have been completed.