

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

School name	Cumbria Academy for Autism
DfE registration number	7003
Unique reference number (URN)	143723
Inspection number	10103160
Inspection dates	11 June 2019
Reporting inspector	Ahmed Marikar HMI



Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

In carrying out this type of inspection, inspectors assess the extent to which the school is likely to meet 'The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014' when it opens.²

The inspector undertook a tour of the school site where the school will be located in September 2019. He reviewed the architect's plans for the accommodation, scrutinised information available on the school website and reviewed a range of policies and procedures. The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a member of staff with responsibility for maintaining the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. He also held discussions with the chair of the governing body of Cumbria Academy for Autism and the building site manager.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	56. Initially 32 in September 2019
Age range	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Autistic spectrum disorder

Context of the school

This new provision is a four to 19 all-through special school on a new site. The school will cater for pupils aged between four and 19 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Cumbria Academy for Autism will open in September 2019, in purpose-built, state-of-the-art facilities. In the first year of opening, the school will accommodate up to 32 pupils with four pupils in each of Years 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The final capacity for the school will be 56.

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

² www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made. Part 1 to Schedule 1 is not reported against because it does not apply to academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens.
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Recommended number of day pupils	56
Recommended age range	4–19
Recommended gender of pupils	Mixed
Recommended type of special educational needs	Autistic spectrum disorder

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in relation to this part. Documentation demonstrates the school has carefully mapped out, through the curriculum, a range of opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and understanding. British values, such as respect and tolerance, will be taught through personal, health, social and economic education lessons and supported through assemblies and enrichment activities.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the relevant regulations. A comprehensive range of policies are in place, including for behaviour, health, safety (including fire safety), risk assessment, first aid and safeguarding. The school's intimate care policy ensures that there are suitable procedures in place to enable staff to cater effectively for pupils who have complex needs. Although the fire-safety order cannot be issued until the site is ready, it is scheduled to take place as soon as possible after building completion and before pupils arrive.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. Almost all the required checks on appointed staff and governors are already compiled on a single central register, which complies with requirements. A small number of recently appointed staff and governor checks are ongoing and the stage of the verification process is indicated on the register. There are appropriate procedures in place to conduct the required background checks on staff. Leaders have undertaken additional training to ensure the safety of the school's pupils. All appointments to date have followed safer recruitment practices.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. Governors have planned the new building to ensure that it supports pupils' welfare and promotes their learning. The school building has wide-ranging facilities to cater for pupils' individual needs. These include, provision for first aid, medical facilities, toilet and shower facilities, a sensory room and outdoor recreational areas. Leaders are committed to continuing to secure high-quality provision which meets all necessary regulations.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all the requirements. All the required policies, including an up-to-date safeguarding policy, are in place and available to parents and carers via the website. Policies are clear, detailed and provide comprehensive information for pupils and parents. The safeguarding policy reflects latest guidance and meets requirements. All policies can be made available on request.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all of the relevant regulations. The complaints policy is comprehensive. The policy contains all the necessary steps as well as timelines for the effective handling of complaints. The policy is available to parents via the school's website. Copies can be made available if requested.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. Leaders will bring with them a wealth of expertise and knowledge. Leaders have a clear vision and ethos for the school which is based on the school's motto of 'Be the best version of yourself'. They have established a comprehensive suite of policies, which are in line with current regulations. Leaders have prioritised pupils' well-being and safety in their plans for the new school building. Leaders are also clear about how they will continue to monitor provision so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. The policy for equalities recognises and outlines support for a range of groups. The school has an accessibility plan which will be reviewed again before pupils arrive. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the values of the school.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

All the statutory requirements for the early years are likely to be met. The school has appointed staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to teach the early years.

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