

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

School name	Gems Wantage Primary Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	931/2033
Unique reference number (URN)	147839
Inspection number	10148480
Inspection dates	22/05/2020 and 29/05/2020
Reporting inspector	Karine Hendley HMI



Information about the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education. It was carried out under section 99(1) 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 inspection was carried out during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As a result, we could not visit the school site or meet with the proposer in person. The inspector held telephone discussions with the headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO) for the trust and the chair of the board of trustees. The inspector viewed a virtual tour of the school site, reviewed the architects' plans, scrutinised information available on the school's website and reviewed a range of policies and procedures. Using the available information, the inspector is able to give sufficient assurance that the school is likely to meet the independent school standards.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	420, plus a 26-place Nursery
Age range	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Not applicable

Context of the school

This new provision is a primary school within the Gems Learning Trust. It is a presumption school, introduced to serve a growing community and new housing estate. Oxfordshire County Council are responsible for constructing the building and site. Construction is under way and the site is estimated to be ready for occupation by mid-September 2020.

There are currently 29 pupils due to be admitted in September 2020: eight into Nursery, 18 into Reception and three into a mixed Year 1/2 class. Leaders anticipate that admission numbers might rise before opening. The final capacity of the school

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

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

will be 420 pupils, with two forms of entry in each year group and a 26-place Nursery for children from the age of two.

The Gems Learning Trust has already opened two new schools. Both have subsequently been judged to be outstanding. The proposed school will benefit from the expertise of trust leaders and staff, as well as the centralised services available.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards when it opens.
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Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

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

The proposed school is likely to meet the standards for this part. Leaders place a heavy emphasis on their aims for an inclusive school that values diversity. Leaders' plans to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are comprehensive. Plans for a combination of assemblies, lessons, themed events, educational visits and visiting speakers are in place. Leaders have identified learning opportunities across subjects such as religious education, art, personal social, health and economic education, history and geography to promote pupils' SMSC development. Leaders have also thought of a wide range of complementary strategies aimed at supporting pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. For example, leaders have planned for pupils to participate in an elected school council and to create 'class charters' that provide the rules, rights and responsibilities for each class. Leaders have given careful consideration to how they will teach pupils about protected characteristics, including through resources and books which will be chosen to champion equality. Provision in relation to this part is likely to be strong.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet the standards for this part. Policies are comprehensive and leaders have experience of implementing them in existing trust schools. Policies and other evidence indicate that appropriate procedures will be in place for behaviour, supervision of pupils, risk assessment, first aid and child protection.

Designated safeguarding leaders are experienced and have systems in place to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about this aspect of keeping children safe. Trust leaders have systems in place to frequently check on all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety. This includes monthly spot-checks and the use of independent, external experts. When construction of the site is completed, leaders intend to commission fire risk assessors and other health and safety professionals to ensure that the premises are consistently safe.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. Leaders have a safer recruitment policy in place that sets out leaders' intention to satisfy all aspects of the statutory guidance set out by the Secretary of State. The trust's experienced business manager is responsible for setting up the single central register. When appointed, the office manager will maintain it. The headteacher and CEO will then regularly check that all aspects are compliant. Both have completed safer recruitment training. Leaders intend to use a checklist during recruitment to ensure that all pre-employment actions are completed. They also use a system of auditing to make sure no requirements are overlooked during the recruitment process.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. A virtual tour of the school site was carried out. Construction is well under way and contractors are confident that the school will be ready for occupation in mid-September 2020. Detailed plans were scrutinised. These include provision for external lighting and drinking water. Acoustic wall panels are being fitted in all classrooms and thermostatic valves installed to taps to prevent the risk of scalding. There will be a lift to aide accessibility for disabled pupils. The outdoor space is extensive and includes a grassed sports field, multi-purpose games area and grassed and hard surfaces for play. Evidence indicates that the building will be completed to a high specification in line with the independent school standards. Leaders have plans in place to appoint a premises manager and to commission external contractors to ensure that the building is maintained to a high standard.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. All necessary policies are written and are published on the school's website. Leaders have also made provision for parents to request copies from the school, including in accessible formats. Leaders intend to use methods for reporting to parents about pupils' attainment and progress, which have been tried and tested in other trust schools.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. The complaints policy is compliant with the criteria. It is clearly written and is published on the school's website. It gives timescales for dealing with complaints.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. Leaders have a proven track record in providing high-quality education and raising pupils' achievement. They have also supported schools in challenging circumstances to improve. Trust leaders have already opened two new schools and have supported other organisations in creating and opening new schools. Therefore, they have a secure knowledge of the independent school standards. They have also developed monitoring systems within their existing schools, which provide them with assurances that their statutory duties are met. This system of checking will be extended to the proposed school. Leaders have been successful in gaining outstanding ratings for both of their existing schools at their first inspections. Leaders have plans in place to appropriately support pupils' well-being. The proposed school will benefit from the expertise and the central services within the trust.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements. Leaders have an accessibility plan in place which aims to make learning, the environment and resources accessible for all groups of pupils.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

All statutory requirements for the early years are likely to be met. The newly appointed headteacher and early years leader have considerable expertise in foundation stage provision, including for two year olds. Leaders have experience of implementing the early years welfare requirements, including in existing trust schools. Policies are in place that link well to whole-school policies.

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