

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

School name	The Austen Academy
DfE registration number	850/7005
Unique reference number (URN)	148343
Inspection number	10173687
Inspection date	24/02/2021
Reporting inspector	Clive Close, Her Majesty's Inspector



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. The inspector met with the headteacher, other members of the school's leadership team, the executive principal, representatives of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the governing board. Some of the meetings were carried out remotely. The inspector reviewed a wide range of policies and documents, including the school's single central register of checks on adults and the school's current website.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free special school for:

Number of day pupils	128
Age range	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Autism spectrum disorder

Context of the school

It is proposed that this new special school will open on 1 April 2021 in a newly built facility. In the first instance, the school will admit approximately 18 pupils in a limited age range, then gradually increase pupil and staff numbers in a carefully managed process of expansion. All pupils will have an education, health and care plan and will be placed by local authorities.

The school occupies a site on the edge of a residential area in Basingstoke. It has its own playgrounds, green-field areas and landscaped grounds. It will be part of Catch22 Multi Academies Trust Limited. The trust will provide oversight of the school through a local governing board with delegated responsibilities for governance. Officers of the trust will also provide support and challenge to school leaders,

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.

including for safeguarding, the quality of education, finance and the management of human resources, including the recruitment of staff.

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 school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. Leaders plan to deliver a bespoke package to ensure that all pupils' individual needs are met. They propose to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and emotional development through the taught curriculum, as well as additional, personalised activities. Some aspects of this would be realised through the school's personal, social and health education scheme of work for instance. However, leaders are clear that this part of the school's provision will be very holistic in nature. This is due to the context of the pupils who will attend, many of whom may not have accessed formal education for some time before joining the school. Leaders are keenly aware of the need to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain, as well as supporting them in their next steps on leaving the school.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. Appropriate policies are already in place for aspects such as behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety, and risk assessments. The safeguarding policy is compliant with current guidelines. Staff who are already appointed have received or are receiving training appropriate to their individual levels of responsibility to keep pupils safe. Leaders have already established systems and processes to ensure that new staff are trained in a timely manner, including for managing pupils' behaviour and for administering first aid. A fire risk assessment was carried out by an independent company two days before this inspection. Oversight from the multi-academy trust for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors to the school is already established.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. The single central register is already in place and the necessary information is recorded thoroughly. Appropriate pre-employment checks have been carried out on all staff at the school. Leaders are aware of the range of checks that need to be carried out on adults who come into contact with pupils. This includes members of the local governing board. Leaders do not intend to use supply staff but are aware of their responsibility to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out if this ever becomes the case.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. At the time of the inspection, building work on the new school was nearly complete, with final checks being made on buildings and the grounds. Most of the furniture and other resources are already in the school. Aspects of part 5, such as toilets, the medical room, drinking water and hot and cold running water, are all complete. The sports hall and

outside areas of the school provide ample space for pupils to access the school's physical education curriculum and also to play.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. The school's new website already contains a wide range of documents and policies. This includes the safeguarding policy, which is compliant with current guidelines. Leaders are aware of the requirements of part 6 as well as the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding what free schools should publish on their websites.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. The complaints policy is fully compliant with part 7 and will be available on the website or in paper form before the school opens. Leaders fully understand all requirements of this part, including the requirement to publish the number of complaints in the previous school year on the school's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards in this part. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school's future. They possess the necessary knowledge and experience to lead a special school successfully.

The proposed school will become part of an established multi-academy trust, if approval is given. A local governing board is partly in place. An experienced chair and other community governors appointed by the trust are already working with leaders to ensure that the school is ready to open in all respects in April. Other governors will join the board as suitable staff and parents join the school. Systems and procedures for officers from the multi-academy trust to support and challenge school leaders are already in place.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Relevant policies and plans are in place. Leaders understand their duties under the Act.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

Despite registering for age four and upwards, the provider does not intend to provide early years foundation stage (EYFS) provision. The supplemental funding agreement also includes the age range four to 16. It appears the application from age four to 16 is to ensure that this option is available in future (also see paragraph 2.C of the funding agreement). The maximum number of pupils on roll applied for at the time of the pre-registration inspection does not include EYFS provision. The Her Majesty's

Inspector was not provided with any evidence to support the registration of early years provision.

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