

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

School name	The Academy of Central Bedfordshire
DfE registration number	999/1441
Unique reference number (URN)	1441
Inspection number	422339
Inspection dates	03 June 2013
Reporting inspector	Fatiha Maitland

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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

The proposed Academy of Central Bedfordshire is a free school, which consists of two sites. Although both sites are situated in Central Bedfordshire, they are far from each other. The main school is located in Stotfold, in Hertfordshire. This was previously known as 'Roecroft Lower School', which is now vacated. This school has moved to new premises. The management of the free school is currently using some of the school's offices to manage the project. The second building is known as 'Kingsland Campus', which used to be a pupil referral unit. This is located in Houghton Regis, in Central Bedfordshire. Governors (trustees) are practising headteachers.

The school is not open but intends to do so in September 2013. Kingsland Campus will open its doors in September 2013. The Stotfold site will operate from January 2014. The school plans to admit up to 140 boys and girls, aged between 11 and 16 years of age. The school will generally accept students who are disaffected with a history of disrupted schooling including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The school will also cater for students who are looked after by their local authorities.

The school's vision is 'to provide an outstanding alternative curriculum provision for all our students. It will be locally based and dedicated to a positive experience for all students with clearly defined success pathways. The curriculum will be personalised and appropriate to the needs of the students'.

The inspector visited the school in Stotfold, in Hertfordshire, where she conducted a scrutiny of documentation and had discussions with the management of the free school. She also carried out a learning walk around the premises in Stotfold and checked the premises plan for both sites. Some extension work has taken place in Kingsland Campus. There are also plans to extend the premises in Stotfold in the near future. The inspector also had discussions with the project manager that gave reassurance that both premises will be ready to receive students as planned. The school has no specific religious affiliation. This is the school's first registration visit.

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

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The free school leaders provided sufficient evidence to indicate that the planned provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is likely to meet all the regulations, but implementation could not be checked. The school's vision, aims and ethos, tutorial support and the programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education will give students a positive outlook on life, distinguish right from wrong and to be able to make informed healthy choices.

Scrutiny of documentation indicates that there is a strong emphasis on promoting tolerance and developing an appreciation of and respect for other faiths and cultures. Learning about government, politics and parliament, and human rights, alongside visits to places of interest, will provide students with adequate opportunities to gain knowledge and understanding of public institutions and services in England, to respect British democracy and to be aware of the importance and workings of civil law.

Discussions with the management of the school indicate that leaders will monitor the content and the teaching of its curriculum, including extra-curricular activities and support from visitors to the school to ensure that staff do not promote any particular political views to students and that there is a balanced presentation when any political issues arise.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Three regulations are not likely to be met. Implementation could not be checked, as the school was not operating. The school has devised detailed procedures to assess and manage safety risks related to educational visits. The school has prepared written policies to promote good behaviour amongst students with clear codes of conduct, a set of suitable rewards and sanctions and information about the prevention of bullying. The school has a comprehensive policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, with clear roles, responsibilities and procedures for dealing with allegations against staff. This is well supported by the school's safer recruitment policy and procedures. The school has recently appointed two designated child protection officers. All members of staff including the designated child protection officers are now firmly booked to attend the relevant child protection training on 21-22 July 2012.

A detailed health and safety policy is in place. However, the school has yet to carry out the risk assessments on both sites with regard to the Department guidance for the safety of premises and resources. The school has yet to assure itself that there is a satisfactory level of fire safety for both premises, identified by its risk assessment under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The school has recruited a health and safety consultant and there are clear plans to carry out the necessary risk assessments before the opening of the school, including those relating to the premises and resources. The school is aware of its duty to ensure that the premises are to be

checked by the local fire authority and a copy of that report will be sent to the Department for Education in due course.

A first aid policy exists. There are currently two staff with up-to-date training in first aid on each site. The school has also recruited a first aid trainer and is planning to train more staff in first aid in the near future. The school has appropriate procedures for the completion of attendance and admissions registers. An electronic system is fully in place. The school has drawn up a suitable three-year accessibility improvement plan to fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

- ensure that all members of staff including the designated child protection officers have undertaken the relevant child protection training as planned (paragraph 7)
- carry out risk assessments on the premises and resources to ensure students' health and safety (paragraph 11)
- ensure that there is a satisfactory level of fire safety for both premises, identified by its risk assessment under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13).

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All of the regulations are likely to be met. The school has conducted all the required vetting checks on members of staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. Suitable recruitment procedures are in place for the employment of additional staff. The school is aware of the safeguarding requirements should it do so.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a criminal record check as a headteacher of a school in Central Bedfordshire. A request has been made to the Department for Education to carry out the necessary further vetting checks on this individual. The process has not yet been completed and the Chair of the Governing Body is awaiting the outcome of the vetting checks. All other governors have criminal record checks as headteachers. Checks have also been made on their identity and right to work in the United Kingdom. The school has applied for disclosure and barring service checks on all governors. The single central register is correctly completed.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. Discussions with the leadership of the school and the project manager, scrutiny of the premises plans and a learning walk in Stotfold indicate that the premises are fit for purpose. The premises comprise

several classrooms and spaces for individual support. The school has ensured that, on each site, there is a suitable designated area for students to go to when they are unwell. The provisions have a washbasin and are located near washroom facilities. The current provision of toilets and washbasins is adequate for staff and the proposed number of students at each site. The school has made arrangements for students to have access to suitable outdoor areas to play safely. The Stotfold site has its own changing and shower facilities for on-site physical education. At Kingsland Campus, students will have access to the local leisure centre for physical activities, where they can use the changing and shower facilities.

The Education Funding Agency, which is the Department's delivery agency, is managing the process of acquiring the premises on behalf of the governing body. The Department will continue to monitor the progress of the premises directly with the Agency.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy and procedures are likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

YES. The school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement/completion of:

- the school should ensure that all members of staff including the designated child protection officers have undertaken the relevant child protection training as planned (paragraph 7)
- the school should carry out risk assessments on the premises and resources to ensure students' health and safety (paragraph 11)
- the school should ensure that there is a satisfactory level of fire safety for both premises, identified by its risk assessment under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13).

Recommended number of day pupils: 140 students

Recommended number of boarders: N/A

Recommended age range: 11-16 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: BESD.