

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

School name	Gildredge House
DfE registration number	0149
Unique reference number (URN)	1470
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Reporting inspector	Sue Rogers

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Context of the school

Gildredge House School is administered by the Gildredge House Free School Trust. The Trust plans to open this all-through mixed school, for up to 1,232 pupils aged from four to 18, in September 2013. The trustees' main aims are to respond to the reported shortage of primary school places in the area and to provide all-through education including a sixth form; an integrated sixth form is not available anywhere else in the locality. The school's motto is 'Aspire' and its specific curricular aims are to provide optimum challenge through a broad curriculum with an international focus and an extended school day.

Trustees have been fortunate to secure a beautiful site, nestled under the South Downs, within buildings occupied until recently by the Dental Estimates Board. Previously, the buildings were utilised as a preparatory school and parts of this original building remain. A two-phase building programme is well underway to adapt, refurbish, demolish and extend various parts of the current establishment.

Trustees have made good use of advice from the Place Group and School Business Services. The latter have offered support with finance, admissions and recruitment especially. Consequently, the school is operating admissions itself and has a readily available admissions policy. This makes it clear that the school is open to all pupils, including those who have special educational needs. The school intends to open with pupils in Reception and Year 7. These year groups are already oversubscribed, with the current roll standing at 176. This is testament to the fact that the school is meeting local needs. Leaders have been assiduous in visiting the 20 or so prospective feeder schools in the area, as well as making links with the families of registered younger pupils. They are therefore beginning to build up their pupil profile, but they do not, as yet, have a complete picture.

Nearly all of the required staff, including a headteacher, a deputy headteacher and 13 other teachers have already been appointed. One more teacher and office staff have yet to be recruited.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations, but implementation could not be seen. The school has a clear and appropriate policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These themes run throughout its documentation, with clear emphasis on respect and community. A house system is intended to underpin a strong pastoral ethos. A comprehensive list of clubs and extra-curricular activities has been designed to fill the end of the compulsorily extended day (until 5.00pm), and to develop self-awareness and mutual respect. Tutor-time and philosophy sessions will especially contribute towards self-knowledge and self-esteem, as will 'Circle Time' for younger pupils.

The programme of study encapsulates moral and spiritual values. Units such as the study of Louis Sachar's book 'Holes', alongside the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme should ensure effective personal development, the ability to distinguish right from wrong and an insight into civil law. Regular sessions for 'community' and 'challenge' are built into the timetable, designed to develop intra-school relations as well as outreach into the locality. For example, pupils are to be encouraged to liaise with local groups and teach over-60s groups to use information technology effectively. A planned programme of visits and visitors, such as the local magistrates and coastguards, should ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and the workings of public institutions and services.

A thorough behaviour policy lays out expectations for high standards of behaviour. Supporting pupils' development of tolerance and respect for other cultures is a pivotal part of the planned philosophy programme; it is also integrated into modern foreign language teaching. Planned themes include, for example, learning about all major religions and a range of French-speaking countries. Links with Togo are already being developed to this end. The proprietors have ensured that the planned curriculum, including provision for students' personal development, is free from partisan political or religious views and that, where any political issues are discussed, a balanced view is always presented. Very helpful pupil handbooks contain a wealth of useful information to support students' learning, including reminders to be alert for bias in reading material. A debating club and the house system, with elected captains, are just two examples of the many ways in which the school plans to develop an understanding of democracy and British values.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet almost all the regulations. All required policies relating to welfare, health, safety and safeguarding are in place and are likely to be compliant with current requirements, subject to implementation. The trustees have drawn up a suitable three-year access development plan (Equality Plan) for the refurbished buildings. Anti-bullying and behaviour policies are detailed and cross-reference clearly to other policies. The health and safety policy includes all that is required, including reference to risk assessments for any visits to be undertaken and appropriate first-aid procedures. Leaders have ensured that staff on site also hold the requisite first-aid qualifications. There has been a thorough fire risk assessment carried out by a consultant and the fire service has visited the site to give advice. It is not able to issue a report until the building refurbishment is complete.

The school has bought in the relevant software to set up suitable electronic attendance and admission registers in readiness for the school's opening. Leaders have ensured that at least one member of any staff appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training. They understand the need to check the previous employment history of staff and take up references. The headteacher has the necessary 'designated person' child protection training. All teachers have previously undertaken safeguarding training, but updates are planned for the beginning of the autumn term so that requirements will be met.

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

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by arranging a report from the fire authority as soon as refurbishment work is complete (paragraph 13).

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All required checks have already been completed for the proprietors and for all but one teacher appointed to date. Checks are recorded on a suitable single central register. Entries on the register are updated as new staff are appointed, so the school is doing all that it should in order to meet requirements. The school does not intend to employ supply staff at the moment, but is aware of its responsibilities should supply staff be appointed in the future.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

Detailed project plans, timescales and engineers' specifications show that the refurbished buildings are likely to be ready for the planned opening. The specifications meet all the regulations. The classes at Gildredge House are to be taught in spacious, purpose-designed classrooms, with appropriate heating, ventilation and portable electronic whiteboards. The number of toilets and washbasins is more than adequate. There are excellent outdoor and indoor recreation and sports facilities planned. Initially, pupils will make use of the current grassed and paved areas at playtimes and breaks. These will also be utilised for physical education. Showers and changing rooms are available for pupils' use. The school also has access to other local authority and university sports facilities. A suitable outdoor area is being converted for Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor learning.

Plans are in place to adapt the buildings to ensure suitable access for any disabled pupils. For example, existing lifts are being recommissioned. The temporary medical room facilities are large and adjacent to other required facilities. For the first year, school lunches will be delivered on site by a catering company. When phase 2 of the building development is opened there will be access to a large refectory, with a modern kitchen. Plans incorporate the provision of drinking water, which will be suitably labelled. Some furnishings and fittings from the existing site are being utilised and other furniture and equipment required are on order. Office accommodation is also being furnished appropriately.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations. The school's website is informative, although still under development. All required policies will be available online and detailed parents' and staff handbooks are also being prepared. These handbooks will contain all policies on computer disks, so ensuring that everyone is familiar with what is expected. There has been valuable and ongoing consultation with parents and carers and other members of the community over the establishment of the school. Regular termly reports to parents and carers on their children's progress are planned.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education Registration

Is registration recommended?

YES. The school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement in relation to the following matter:

- Comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing an up-to-date fire risk assessment and arranging a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

Recommended number of day pupils: 1,232

Recommended age range: 4–18

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Special educational needs: N/A.