

Advice note for pre-registration inspections of all types of academies and free schools/studio schools/university technical colleges (UTC)

School name	Bedford Free School
DfE registration number	999/1233
Unique reference number (URN)	1233
Inspection number	403952
Inspection dates	14 June 2012
Reporting inspector	David Young

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Context of the school

The proposed Bedford Free School is located in former commercial premises which have been converted for educational use by Bedford College. The school is overseen by the Bedford and Kempston Free School Trust and project-managed by the college. The school has applied for registration for up to 500 students in the age range 11 to 16 years. The school will admit boys and girls and it is anticipated that the intake will include students with statements of special educational needs. It is proposed that the school will open on 3 September 2012 with an intake of 200 students in Years 7 and 9 only during the first year. There are plans to implement significant refurbishment work, including some remodelling of internal spaces in advance of opening. The school aims to build a culture around respect for all; honesty from all and high expectations.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that all regulations are likely to be met but implementation could not be seen. The school proposes to support and facilitate the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students in a number of ways. Opportunities will be provided through the curriculum in core academic subjects, including humanities. Specific curriculum provision will be made through an enrichment programme which includes health and welfare and 'global communities' strands. Assemblies, competitions, house activities and celebrations are planned to underpin the personal development of students, including their self-esteem and confidence. The behaviour policy is based on the development of positive working relationships and rewards and sanctions which reinforce an understanding of right and wrong within the school and wider community. The values of the school are also written into planning and management documentation at every level. The global communities programme in particular will support students' understanding of public institutions and services. It will broaden their understanding of the national and global communities with an emphasis on the development of respect and tolerance for diversity of cultures and beliefs.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that all regulations are likely to be met but implementation could not be seen. The school has produced appropriate policies for safeguarding and welfare of students, together with guidelines for staff, and safer recruitment procedures. The policies for behaviour, anti-bullying and exclusions, together with procedures for rewards and sanctions, provide an appropriate and consistent context for the management of behaviour and development of students' personal responsibility. The health and safety policy includes suitable arrangements for oversight of the premises, ensuring safe working practice and the completion of relevant risk assessments. The educational visits policy and procedures provide appropriate guidance and requirements for safe practice. The premises are currently

covered by a fire risk assessment held by the college which occupies the building at present, last reviewed in August 2011. A fire strategy report has also been produced which approves the building for use as a school for the proposed age range. Agreement has been reached with the local fire service for submission of a revised fire risk assessment once the refurbishment of the premises is completed.

The school is working to an appropriate project management plan with clearly identified dates for satisfactory completion of all those aspects which are not yet completed. As a result, the outstanding regulations are likely to be met before the school opens. Dates are identified and arrangements securely in place for child protection training for the designated person and all staff; extension of the safeguarding policy with procedures for managing disclosures by students, and for addressing any allegations against a member of staff; the production of a first aid policy (appropriately trained staff have already been appointed); and the production of a three-year accessibility plan. A management information system has been purchased and this is set up to accommodate details of incidents and sanctions, admission and attendance registers, and the single central register of checks on staff and proprietors.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school's planning for the completion of all required checks on the suitability of staff and implementation to date, indicates that all regulations are likely to be met. A suitable template for the single central register has been prepared and all required details of staff and trustees/governors are being transferred on to this from the existing records on the college information system. The school's recruitment procedures ensure that all required checks are completed. The school does not plan to employ supply staff.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. The school is to be located in premises which are currently used for teaching and office space by Bedford College. Much of the accommodation is currently used for teaching and is suitable for immediate occupation. There are plans for refurbishment of some parts of the building. The refurbishment work is due to start by 2 July at the latest and to be completed before the school opens in September, in line with the school's project plan. The accommodation will then provide sufficient teaching spaces and facilities for the intake in the first year. Further remodelling of additional spaces will take place during school holidays at the end of the first year to provide specialist facilities for practical subjects to GCSE. The building work is being overseen by the department's delivery agent, the Education Funding Agency. The department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the agency. The site includes sufficient outside space for play and recreation and will be securely fenced with one point of secured entry during the school day. The school has agreed access to sports facilities in the adjacent college and additional sports facilities in the town.

Provision of information

The provision meets all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision meets all regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

Is registration recommended?

YES. This school is likely to meet all regulations and national minimum standards when it opens and is recommended for registration.

Recommended number of day pupils: 500

Recommended age range: 11–16 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: n/a.