

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

School name	St Mary Magdalene Academy: The Courtyard
DfE registration number	206/7000
Unique reference number (URN)	139418
Inspection number	422392
Inspection dates	26 June 2013
Reporting inspector	David Scott

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 Courtyard free school will be part of St Mary Magdalene Academy and will be located in the grounds of the church of St Mary Magdalene which is directly opposite the host academy. The school will be sponsored by London Diocesan Board and is due to open on 1 September 2013. The school has applied to be registered to admit 36 boys and girls aged from 14 to 19 years, who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder or who have speech, language and communication needs. It will admit students aged 14 to 19 in its first year. At present, there are 14 students registered for enrolment, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. For September 2013, the school will operate from a decommissioned church building, known as St David's, which is currently being refurbished. In the long term, this building will accommodate the sixth form students from the academy. The new purpose-built facility for the Courtyard is due to be completed by August 2014. The aim of the Courtyard is to enable all students to leave fully 'equipped with the skills to be able to live and work independently'.

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's intended Christian ethos will aim 'to nurture young people to become high achievers and discover their vocation in a global society', which will be at the heart of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school plans to adopt a commercially available internet blog (already in use in the academy) which neatly links the PSHE, assembly, religious education and family-time programmes together. This planned programme, across all faith and non-faith groups, is intended to provide all students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens by appreciating and respecting the diversity of various traditions and cultures globally and in the local community, and to develop an understanding of civil law, public institutions and services in England. It will provide opportunities for students to contribute to activities in the local community. Social development will be further promoted by allowing students to access the main academy for lunch, assemblies, family-time and, where appropriate, some lessons. The staff handbook gives details to ensure that planned lessons and activities will be free from partisan, political or religious views and that, where any political issues are discussed, a balanced view is always presented.

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that all regulations are likely to be met. The school has suitable policies in place for safeguarding students, safer recruitment and first aid. All staff and governors have undergone suitable training in safer recruitment, safeguarding students and child protection.

Policies for health and safety, evacuation and planning for school journeys and educational visits have been compiled. Risk assessments have been completed, including fire safety, and a visit from the fire department has been arranged. The behaviour and anti-bullying policy sets high expectations of students and will promote 'a non-aversive approach to behaviour management'. Suitable attendance and admission registers are available electronically and ready for use. The school has in place a three-year accessibility plan to review and improve equality of access for disabled students.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All the required vetting checks on all appointed staff and members of the governing body are captured in a single central record. If the need arises, the school will employ supply staff, and has appropriate procedures in place to conduct the checks on such staff.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

A tour of the site and scrutiny of the architect's plans confirm that the refurbishment of the St David's site is likely to meet the regulations in readiness for opening in September. Heating, lighting and ventilation systems are likely to meet requirements. Orders for furniture, fixtures and fittings have been placed (orders seen) to provide a learning environment rich in technology and designed to promote students' independent learning. The access policy details arrangements for disabled students to be admitted to the school. There will be a lift to all floors and all washrooms will be equipped for disabled users. A labelled supply of drinking water will be accessible to students. For lessons in physical education, the school will utilise the academy's showers and changing facilities. A suitable location has been identified for a medical room, on the first floor, with washrooms located nearby. The St David's site has very limited outside space, but the school intends to use the outside facilities within the grounds of the academy for recreation and physical education. The school has appropriate risk assessments in place to ensure students will be safely chaperoned when walking to and from the venue.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school is likely to meet all the regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

Is registration recommended?

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

Recommended number of day pupils: 36

Recommended age range: 14–19

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Autistic spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs.