

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

School name	REACH
DfE registration number	330/1107
Unique reference number (URN)	139671
Inspection number	422335
Inspection dates	18 June 2013
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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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

Reach is to become a free school. It is situated in the Kings Heath area of Birmingham on the main high street. The free school was formerly a pupil referral unit which was set up and funded by a group of local schools. These schools are now managing the transition of the unit into a free school. It will provide for up to 64 students in Years 9 to 11 who are referred from schools because either because they are vulnerable, have poor attendance, are at risk of exclusion or have been excluded. Year 10 and 11 students will be full-time but Year 9 students, who will not be admitted until the second year of the school's operation, will have negotiated attendance, possibly a six-week block a day a week, or a period of respite depending on their needs. Full-time students are to spend three days each week at the school's premises and a day a week at college or on employers' premises having experience of work. On the fifth day students are to complete personal challenges designed to encourage students to 'move out of their comfort zones', develop self-awareness and social skills. The school will admit male and female students through the local authority admissions panel. It plans to take students with or without special educational needs but will not be wholly or mainly for this group. It aims to cater for those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and mild autism. It has no religious affiliation.

Reach plans to open in September 2013 in the pupil referral unit's existing premises with the 26 students currently attending the unit, which are offices adapted for teaching students. In mid-July 2013, work is to begin on adjacent offices arranged on three floors to provide more spacious premises adapted for secondary students. The internal remodelling of the offices and some refurbishment to an outdoor area is planned for completion by mid-October 2013.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the regulations although implementation of plans and policies could not be seen at this visit. There is a clear policy setting out how the school intends to encourage this aspect of student's development. Associated policies, such as that for behaviour, show the strategies that the school will use. For example, there is a clear set of sanctions and rewards and achievements are to be

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

recognised and celebrated. The school intends to teach citizenship, including insights into the working of civil law, and personal, social and health education, fostering enterprise skills and providing careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students are to carry out voluntary work, become involved in community events such as charity fund-raising, and take on a range of responsibilities including as peer mentors and librarians. Opportunities are planned for students to express their own beliefs and views, when reflecting on current events and news stories for example. Equally, the school plans to encourage respect for cultural diversity, other's feelings, values and beliefs. The staff handbook is to set out expectations of staff in relation to providing a balanced view on these matters, and monitoring of student's experiences when on employers' premises or at college will include checks on this issue. The school will discourage partisan political views and give pupils an unbiased view of political issues. There are to be opportunities to stimulate students' imagination and creativity, such as through artistic and musical experiences, as well as to sample sporting, mathematical, technological and cultural challenges. Plans include a mechanism for students' views to be voiced and considered. Half-termly meetings between each student and their tutor are intended to personalise this aspect of provision to meet each individual's needs.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet most of the regulations, although implementation could not be seen at this visit. It has all the required policies to guide this aspect of its work.

The child protection policy contains all that it should. There are two staff trained as designated persons for child protection and all staff will have had training by the time the school opens. There is a policy setting out how the school will safeguard students through its recruitment procedures, which are being operated by one of the local schools managing the transition to free school status. The policy has strengths with respect to robust procedures for recruiting regular staff, but has some minor omissions as noted below with respect to checks on supply staff; these do not place students at risk. The school is arranging for several staff to transfer from their existing schools to the free school under TUPE arrangements.

There is a fire risk assessment for the current building, carried out by a company and showing that the risks are 'tolerable'; all action points identified have been addressed. However, there is no risk assessment or report from the fire service for the existing or the new building. Three staff have been trained as fire marshals and evacuations are held regularly. In the current building, checks of fire extinguishers and electrical equipment are up to date. The first aid policy provides practical guidance for staff but omits information on how to deal with spillages of body fluids. Two staff have current training in first aid. A suitable accident book is available for completion and admissions and attendance are to be recorded as required. A range of risk assessments is available for the existing building, each showing clearly how risk can be reduced to a low level.

Although there are clear policies on disability and equality of opportunity, the school does not have a plan showing how it proposes to increase access for people with disabilities. Plans for the new building include the provision of a lift.

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

- ensure compliance with the Regulatory (Fire Safety) Reform Order (2005) (paragraph 13)
- ensure that the policy on first aid provides guidance on dealing safely with spillages of body fluids (paragraph 14)
- meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by drawing up a three-year plan showing how it intends to increase access for people with disabilities.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school's policy on safer recruitment is clear about the checks that need to be made on the school's own staff and governors, but is not detailed enough in respect of supply staff. Although it mentions the need to check the identity of a temporary teacher arriving at school to work, it omits checks on other information, such as the written notifications required from employment businesses. As it stands, implementation of its policy would not be sufficient to meet all the regulations.

The school has started to compile a single central register. This includes checks on one director, who will become a governor, and existing staff. For existing staff, such as the headteacher, the register shows that all have had a check on their suitability to work with children, but some information which should be in the register about checks which have been made on identity, qualifications and right to work in the United Kingdom is missing. The safer recruitment policy is not clear that checks carried out on temporary staff must be recorded on the single central register.

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

- amend its safer recruitment policy to show the full range of information it requires in a written notification from an employment business and implement this aspect of its policy (paragraph 20(2)(a))
- ensure that the person offered for supply by an employment business is suitable for the work required (paragraph 20(2)(b))
- amend its policy on safer recruitment to reflect the need to include in any contractual arrangements with an employment business, the requirements set out in paragraphs 20(2)(a), including a requirement to supply a copy of a criminal record check certificate that contains any disclosures and implement its policy (paragraph 20(2)(d))
- record on the single central register all the checks carried out on staff (paragraph 22(3))

- ensure that in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 20(2)(a) together with the date the written notification that each check was made or certificate obtained, was received (paragraph 22(5)).

Premises of and accommodation at the school

Most of the regulations are likely to be met. When taking account of the attendance pattern of students, and the plan to open with 26 students and increase the roll when the new building is completed, the current accommodation is suitable for the number and age range applied for in most respects. There are suitable toilet facilities, and sufficient outdoor space for the brief breaks planned during the school day. Students will have their physical education sessions at leisure centres or other schools, where there are showers provided. However, there is no medical room in the existing building and although there is a readily accessible source of drinking water, this is not marked as such.

There are firm plans for the internally remodelling the adjacent building, which has been purchased. The timescale for completing the work is realistic. The new building is to be more spacious and will have sufficient classrooms, which are of a good size for the intended eight pupils in each. There are to be suitable specialist rooms for science, art, media studies, library, food technology and associated storage space for resources. The plans include a cafe, interview room, examinations office, central hub and reception area. Outdoors there is a paved area and an area in woodland; the latter could not be seen during the visit as access is via locked gates. The site is securely fenced and there is adequate car parking for staff. There is adequate street lighting at the front of the building and the school's own lighting at the rear over the car park.

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

- provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils that has a washing facility and is close to toilets (paragraphs 23B(1)(a) and (b))
- clearly mark the source of water that is suitable for drinking (paragraph 23F(1)(c)).

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is 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 in relation to the following matters:**
- ensure compliance with the Regulatory (Fire Safety) Reform Order (2005) (paragraph 13)
- ensure that the policy on first aid provides guidance on dealing safely with spillages of body fluids (paragraph 14)
- meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by drawing up a three-year plan showing how it intends to increase access for people with disabilities
- amend its safer recruitment policy to show the full range of information it requires in a written notification from an employment business and implement this aspect of its policy (paragraph 20(2)(a))
- ensure that the person offered for supply by an employment business is suitable for the work required (paragraph 20(2)(b))
- amend its policy on safer recruitment to reflect the need to include in any contractual arrangements with an employment business, the requirements set out in paragraphs 20(2)(a), including a requirement to supply a copy of a criminal record check certificate that contains any disclosures and implement its policy (paragraph 20(2)(d))
- record on the single central register all the checks carried out on staff (paragraph 22(3))
- ensure that in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the checks referred to in 20(2)(a) together with the date the written notification that each check was made or certificate obtained, was received (paragraph 22(5))
- provide accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils that has a washing facility and is close to toilets (paragraphs 23B(1)(a) and (b))
- clearly mark the source of water that is suitable for drinking (paragraph 23F(1)(c)).

Recommended number of day pupils: 64

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 14-16

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/A.