

Advice note for a pre-registration inspection of a free school

School name	The Reach Free School
DfE registration number	999/1446
Unique reference number (URN)	1446
Inspection number	422344
Inspection dates	23 July 2013
Reporting inspector	David Young

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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 Reach Free School is to be located in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. It will open in temporary premises, a converted office block, in September 2013 where it will remain for up to three years while permanent premises nearby are completed. The school is sponsored by Reach Learning Limited. The school has applied to be registered for up to 840 male and female students in the age range 11 to 18 years. In the first year it will admit up to 120 students into Year 7. It is to be a non-selective school and some of the students are likely to have statements of special educational needs. The Reach School has 'an ethos referred to as ACE; Achievement, Community and Enjoyment. The school will strive for academic rigour and to have a strong community spirit ... and to prepare students for a confident and successful working and family life'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school's planning is likely to meet all the regulations, although implementation could not be seen. The school aims to develop students' self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence 'through the setting of aspirational targets, within a nurturing and community-focused environment'. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship includes topics such as personal safety (including substance abuse), sex and relationships, and health issues. This is supported by a behaviour policy which provides a positive framework supporting the school's inclusive ethos, together with clear procedures for implementing rewards and sanctions. The PSHE programme and related assemblies are designed to develop all aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Themes within this programme cover, for example, developing self-esteem, dealing with peer pressure, developing the school community and examining international justice. It includes explicit teaching about civil and criminal law. All students will be involved in projects serving the local community and charitable collections.

All students will have time allocated to 'Community Common Room' as a core subject, to develop their understanding of public services and institutions and the community in which they live, while also developing their entrepreneurial skills. Religious education will be taught as part of a combined humanities programme

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

within which different faiths, traditions and cultures will be explored and celebrated. A number of national and international events, such as Holocaust memorial day and World Refugee Day are built into the planning. In every employee's contract is a clause related to the teaching of political issues to ensure that no partisan views are presented; this will be applied similarly to any visiting organisations.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that the majority of regulations are likely to be met. The school has produced a comprehensive set of required policies and procedures, including child protection, preventing bullying, safety on educational visits and first aid. The school has prepared, and is implementing, a safer recruitment policy which includes all required checks on the suitability of staff. A senior member of staff is booked to complete designated person safeguarding training in the first week in August. Places have been booked for two members of staff to attend 'First Aid at Work' training before the school opens. Child protection training and emergency first aid training for all staff are included in the induction programme to take place in the week before the school opens.

The health and safety policy and separate fire safety policy include suitable arrangements for fire marshal training, the testing of portable electrical appliances, risk assessments, fire evacuation procedures, and periodic tests of all required fire safety equipment. An outline fire risk assessment has been completed, and is to be revised at each refurbishment phase handover. Contact has been made with the local fire authority to agree timescales for completion of the fire risk assessment and issue of the fire authority report. A premises risk assessment has not yet been completed.

The school's electronic information management system has suitable templates for the completion of the admission and attendance registers. Details of any incidents and subsequent sanctions will also be recorded on the system. The school's Equality Plan includes a general commitment to providing equality of access but a three-year plan to increase access has not yet been produced.

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

- comply with health and safety law by producing a risk assessment for the premises (paragraph 11)
- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing a fire risk assessment and a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13)
- draw up an accessibility improvement plan for the premises that fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school's planning for the recruitment and checking of staff suitability, and its implementation to date, indicate that all regulations are likely to be met. All the

required checks have been completed, or are in the process of completion, for the proprietors and staff appointed to date. Details of these are being recorded on a suitable single central register as they are received. The school does not intend to employ agency supply staff in its first year but is aware of the required procedures should such staff be appointed in the future.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the regulations. The school is to be located for up to three years in a modern office block in Rickmansworth, which is being refurbished ready to open in September 2013. Up to 120 students will be admitted into Year 7 in 2013, with further intakes in 2014 and 2015, taking the school to a maximum number on roll of 360 by September 2015.

The longer term plan is to relocate to new premises to be constructed on a vacant plot in the heart of Rickmansworth by September 2016.

Plans are in place for the current premises to be refurbished to accommodate the school with the first phase of work due to be completed by the end of August 2013. These premises were visited and plans viewed and discussed. The Education Funding Agency is managing the preparation and refurbishment plans on behalf of the trust. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the agency.

The premises will be suitable to accommodate up to 120 students in Year 7 with additional phases of refurbishment being released to the school throughout the first term. On completion, this phase of the school building will have appropriate facilities to teach the full Key Stage 3 curriculum. There is adequate safe outside space for play and recreation and for the teaching of some physical education. Additional off-site facilities are available, with suitable agreements in place, for additional physical education and games. There are sufficient separate washrooms for boys, girls and staff. Sufficient showers and changing facilities are included in the plans to accommodate requirements for those physical activities to be taught on site. Some furniture and equipment has already been purchased and sufficient additional items are on order. There are suitable facilities for a medical room to accommodate any student who may be ill. There are appropriate facilities for the preparation and serving of food. Access to the buildings and play area is fully secure.

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:**

The school should:

- comply with health and safety law by producing a risk assessment for the premises (paragraph 11)
- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing a fire risk assessment and a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13)
- draw up an accessibility plan for the premises that fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Recommended number of day pupils: 360*

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11 to 18 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Not applicable

*The school has applied to be registered for up to 840 students. The premises due to open in September 2013 are suitable to accommodate up to 360 students, which is the maximum planned intake over the next three years.

Once the accommodation is completed on the proposed permanent site a material change inspection may be required to assess the suitability of the premises and accommodation to admit up to 840 students.