

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

School name	Durham Free School
DfE registration number	999/1423
Unique reference number (URN)	1423
Inspection number	422317
Inspection dates	26 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 proposed Durham Free School is to be located temporarily in the premises of a previous local authority secondary school in the south east of Durham. These premises will be occupied for two years while a new permanent site is developed nearer to the centre of the school's catchment area. The school has applied to be registered to admit up to 780 male and female students in the age range 11 to 18 years. It will open in September 2013 with an intake of up to 60 students in Year 7, aged 11 and 12 years. The school will be non-selective and will admit some students with statements of special educational needs. The aim of the school is, 'to provide a distinctive and inclusive education shaped by Christian principles and welcoming to all. The school will create a culture of success which will be reflected in the excellent qualifications pupils obtain, academic and vocational'.

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 mission is to educate the whole person. Students will be expected to focus on others' needs before their own; the school will aim to raise students' self-worth and give them the confidence that their individual gifts are valued and can be used for the common good. The schools' anti-bullying, behaviour and discipline, and inclusion policies set out the principles and procedures by which students may understand the difference between right and wrong and be supported in achieving the school's vision. A number of school policies, including those for values, equalities and spiritual, moral and social development set out the principles by which students will be encouraged to contribute to the local and wider communities. The Young Leaders Award is an essential element of the school's curriculum and includes a number of challenges to enable students to contribute in practical ways to the community. The school's policy for the spiritual moral, social and cultural development of students sets out the school's core values and demonstrates how these values are infused throughout the curriculum in a manner which contributes to all four aspects of students' personal development.

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

A number of subjects in the curriculum, including personal, social and health education and citizenship are designed to contribute to students' understanding of public institutions and services in England, together with respect for the fundamental values of British society. Examples include themes on democracy and justice, the civil law and advocacy and representation in the Key Stage 3 citizenship curriculum. Further themes within the curriculum of a number of subjects are designed to assist students to develop respect and appreciation of cultural diversity. The religious education curriculum, for example, ensures that all students study different religious, cultural and philosophical perspectives and are helped to evaluate these in a respectful manner. The school's curriculum documentation provides a balanced approach to evaluating different philosophical and political perspectives and is free from the promotion of any partisan views. The staff handbook places an explicit requirement on staff not to promote any partisan political views.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that the majority of regulations are likely to be met. The school has produced all the required policies, including comprehensive policies and procedures for the management of behaviour and discipline, exclusions, the prevention of bullying, child protection and safeguarding and first aid. The headteacher has been trained in safer recruitment and procedures for the appointment of staff meet requirements. A senior member of staff has been trained to the required level and within the required timescale as designated person for child protection and arrangements are in place for the training of all staff in child protection as part of the induction programme before the school opens so that requirements are likely to be met. A first aid co-ordinator has been identified and trained to the required standard; further staff will be trained before the school opens.

The school's health and safety policy identifies an appropriate range of procedures for ensuring health and safety, including fire safety on and off-site. Responsibilities are clearly defined, including the requirement for periodic checks on all aspects of fire safety. A premises risk assessment and condition survey have been completed. A fire risk assessment has not been completed and awaits the handover of the premises following minor refurbishment. Similarly, a report from the fire authority has not yet been completed. Admission and attendance registers are to be maintained to an appropriate structure on the school's electronic management system, together with records of any serious misbehaviour. The required three-year plan to improve accessibility has not yet been produced.

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

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing a fire risk assessment for the premises 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 completion of all required checks, and implementation to date, indicate that all regulations are met. All required checks have been completed for proprietors and for staff appointed to date. Details of these checks are recorded on a suitable single, central register. Checks are completed and entries made to the register as new staff are appointed. The school does not intend to employ supply staff initially but is aware of the required procedures should supply 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 in the premises of a former local authority secondary school in the south of Durham. The premises are due for handover imminently when minor refurbishment will take place ready to open in September 2013. Plans for the premises and accommodation were scrutinised and discussed with the headteacher. The Education Funding Agency, the Department's delivery agent, is managing the preparation and refurbishment process on behalf of the school. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the Agency.

In September, up to 60 students will be admitted into Year 7, with up to an additional 90 students joining in September 2014. The school will remain in these temporary premises until September 2015 when it will move to purpose-built premises nearer to the centre of its catchment area. The temporary premises include sufficient classrooms to accommodate Years 7 and 8 over the two year period, together with specialist subject facilities, including physical education. There are sufficient separate washrooms for boys, girls and staff, and changing rooms and showers to enable the teaching of physical education and games. The school has included in its plans suitable facilities for medical examinations or for any student who may be ill. There are appropriate facilities for the preparation and serving of food. There is sufficient external space and facilities for play and recreation, including playing fields. The buildings and access points to the grounds are 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:**

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

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing a fire risk assessment for the premises 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: 150 in the first two years*

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11–13 in the first two years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/A.

*The school has applied to be registered for up to 780 students. The premises due to open in September 2013 are suitable to accommodate the proposed 150 pupils to be admitted in the first two years. (The accommodation on the temporary site is also sufficient to admit an additional 120 students in 2015, should there be any delay in the completion of the permanent premises).

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 780 pupils in the age range 11 to 18 years.