

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

School name:	The Wells Free School
DfE registration number:	886/2025
Unique reference number (URN):	139696
Inspection number:	422394
Inspection dates:	6 June 2013
Reporting inspector:	David Scott

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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 Wells Free School is to be located on a former hospital site located in the town centre of Tonbridge Wells. The school is not sponsored and is due to open on 2 September 2013. At present there are 48 children registered for enrolment in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2, but the school aims to grow year-on-year to admit 168 pupils aged from four to 11 years. Currently there is one pupil registered who has a statement of special educational needs. For the first two academic years, 2013/14 and 2014/15, the school will open in a former hospital ward and plans are to move the school by September 2015 into a new building located on the same site. The school's mission is based around its four guiding principles – 'well-being, community, purposeful learning and inclusion' – to enable pupils to leave as decent, respectful young people who are able to make a productive and positive contribution to society.

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. Children's well-being will be central to the school's intended ethos, believing that all pupils can achieve academic success whatever their background or ability. The school will be located at the very heart of the community – 'a village school in the centre of the town'. It will draw upon the skills and experience of parents, carers and members of the local community in order to promote an understanding of citizenship, which is central to the planned provision for personal, social, and health education. The planned curriculum will give children a wide appreciation of cultural issues together with an understanding of public institutions and services in England. The school aims to instil in learners the importance of behaving impeccably, showing respect, politeness and good manners to others at all times. The staff code of conduct, contained in the staff handbook, describes how staff will model excellent behaviour and that lessons will be free from partisan political or religious views, and that, where any political issues are discussed, a balanced view is always presented.

The school aims to open children's minds to the perspectives, cultures and traditions in today's society, acting with integrity and a strong sense of justice by 'challenging them to develop independence, motivation, inquiring minds and a love of learning' in order to make a positive difference as a responsible citizen. There is a planned

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

programme of visits to develop pupils' insights into the working of the civil law in England. Pupils will volunteer to work with members of the local community. The school also intends to make links with a school in South East London in order to give pupils a different perspective of school life. The planned assembly programme, across all faith and non-faith groups, is intended to provide pupils with the opportunity to appreciate and respect the diversity of various traditions and cultures in the local community. Activities such as hymn practice and celebrations of achievement are intended to make a strong contribution to collective worship and to link with the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) themes of the curriculum.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that the majority of regulations are likely to be met, although implementation could not be seen. Policies for safeguarding children, safer recruitment, behaviour management, anti-bullying and first aid have been prepared in accordance with requirements. Senior staff and governors have been trained in safeguarding children, safer recruitment and child protection. For those members of staff still to be appointed, providers and dates have been identified for their training in child protection and safeguarding procedures. Suitable policies have been prepared for all required aspects of health and safety, including fire safety, but a report from the fire authority has not yet been arranged. Admission and attendance registers will be maintained electronically and their formats meet requirements. The school's three year accessibility plan and the single equality scheme provide a commitment to equality of access for disabled pupils and meet the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

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

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by arranging a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

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 indicate that all regulations are likely to be met. All required checks have been completed for the proprietors and for staff appointed to date. These are recorded on a suitable single central register. Checks are completed and entries on the register updated as new staff are appointed. The school does not intend to employ supply staff but is aware of its responsibilities should supply staff be appointed in the future.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

Scrutiny of the architect's plans and schedule of works indicates that the school is likely to meet all the regulations. The school is to be located on the site of a former hospital, which is also being developed to provide housing, commercial offices and a care home. The premises are currently unoccupied and awaiting refurbishment, and

a site visit was not conducted. Detailed plans for the premises and accommodation were scrutinised and a discussion held with the foundation's representative responsible for the premises.

Plans indicate that classrooms are of adequate size and sufficient in number for the planned intake in September 2013. New furniture, fixtures and fittings are on order (orders seen) to be delivered ready for the opening of the school in September. There are sufficient washrooms and provision for a medical room. There are appropriate facilities for the preparation and serving of food. The plans for the outside area are appropriate with attractive landscaping and a separate enclosed area for children in the Reception class.

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. The school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement in relation to the following matters:

- Comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by arranging a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

Recommended number of day pupils: 168

Recommended age range: 4–11 years

Recommended gender of pupils: mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: not applicable.