

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

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| School name | The Swanage School |
| DfE registration number | N/A |
| Unique reference number (URN) | 139376 |
| Inspection number | 422374 |
| Inspection dates | 10 June 2013 |
| Reporting inspector | Sue Rogers |

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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.

Context of the school

The Swanage School is administered by the Education Swanage Trust, who plan to open it in September 2013 as a mixed school for pupils aged from 11 to 16. The main aims of the school are to provide local secondary education and to operate on small-scale and cooperative principles which engage the local community. The school sums this up as:

'Relationships at the heart of the school.
The heart of the community.'

Middle school provision in Swanage, which caters for pupils up to the age of 13, is being phased out. The Swanage Middle School is being replaced by a primary school which will admit pupils up to the age of 11. Currently, the nearest accessible secondary education is in Wareham, about 10 miles away, and many parents are keen for their children to attend a school that is closer to home. A new purpose-designed school is being constructed adjacent to the Middle School building and is scheduled to be completed by next April. The site has already been dug out and the first concrete will be poured at a ceremony this Thursday, 13 June. For the first two terms of its existence, the school has been fortunate to secure accommodation at the nearby Harrow House International College.

The school website and documentation available to parents stress that the school is open to all pupils, including those who have special educational needs. Although the school has already been able to process a considerable number of applications, it is awaiting further details as to those who will be admitted this year. It therefore does not, as yet, have a clear picture of its pupil profile. It is predicted that a minimum of 101 places will be taken up this September, for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. The future intention is that 420 pupils of the age range 11–16 will be admitted in total.

All of the required staff, including a headteacher, a deputy headteacher and nine other teachers, have already been appointed. Office staff and teaching assistants have yet to be recruited.

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 plans place a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development, promoting an ethos where all work together in 'The Swanage School Way'. Leaders have received support from the Co-operative Schools Movement and Human Scale Education, and their principles are woven throughout the comprehensive half-termly thematic learning units. It is anticipated that pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem will be reinforced through a virtual 'Good Book' to which everyone in the community is invited to contribute.

The programme of study encapsulates moral and spiritual values, and units such as one entitled 'Crime and Punishment' should ensure effective personal development, the ability to distinguish right from wrong and an insight into civil law. There is a strong emphasis on contribution to the community and citizenship, with pupils expected to initiate their own projects, such as beach clean-ups. Challenge days and projects, such as a 'disaster project' incorporated within the planning, should ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and the workings of public institutions and their services. Work with the local lifeboat association is expected to feature prominently here.

A comprehensive 'behaviour, exclusions and attendance' policy lays out expectations for high standards of behaviour. Supporting pupils' development of tolerance and respect for other cultures is also seen as key to the work of the school. Planned themes include, for example, learning about all major religions and their festivals. The proprietors have ensured that the planned curriculum, including provision for students' personal development, is free from partisan political or religious views and that, where any political issues are discussed, a balanced view is always presented. Leaders are building in mechanisms to double-check all planning and proposed input by visitors to the school. Detailed guidance on these matters is also to be included in the staff handbook.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet almost all the regulations. All required policies relating to welfare, health, safety and safeguarding are in place and are likely to be compliant with current requirements, subject to implementation. The school has confirmed that the buildings to be utilised already comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have also drawn up a suitable three-year access development plan ('Equality Plan') that is applicable to both buildings. Anti-bullying policies and behaviour policies are thorough. The health and safety policy includes all that is required, including reference to risk assessments for any visits to be undertaken. The school's first aid policy is clear about medical provision. Harrow House School employs a matron and has excellent medical facilities. Other staff on site also hold the requisite first aid qualifications. Training is planned for new employees, ready for the move to the new site. Fire risk assessments for the Harrow House building were last completed in 2008. An assessment was underway at the time of the visit, but the report has not yet been completed. A report from the fire authority has not yet been arranged.

The school has bought in the relevant software to set up suitable electronic attendance and admission registers in readiness for the school's opening. Leaders have ensured that at least one member of any staff appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training. They understand the need to check the previous employment history of staff and take up references. The headteacher and his deputy are booked onto designated person child protection training, to take place shortly. Safeguarding training is planned for all staff before the school opens in the autumn, so that requirements will be met.

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

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing an up-to-date fire risk assessment and arranging a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All required checks have been completed for the proprietors and for most 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. Not all paperwork has yet been returned for more recent appointees but the school is doing all that it should in order to meet requirements. The school does not intend to employ supply staff at the moment, but is aware of its responsibilities should supply staff be appointed in the future.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

All requirements are likely to be met by the current buildings. The classes at Harrow House are to be taught in 10 purpose-built classrooms with appropriate heating, ventilation and electronic whiteboards. The number of toilets and washbasins is more than adequate to meet regulations. There are excellent outdoor recreation and sports facilities including astro-turfed surfaces, a sports dome and swimming pool.

The buildings are already adapted to ensure suitable access for any pupils with disabilities. Medical room facilities are good. Healthy food with a salad bar is available from a modern canteen. Drinking water is available and suitably labelled. Suitable furnishings and fittings for classrooms are already in situ and specialist equipment such as science tables is on order. Attic classrooms are being adapted for temporary changing rooms and shower facilities are available. Office accommodation is being furnished appropriately.

Detailed project plans, timescales and engineers' specifications show that the new buildings are likely to be ready for the planned opening next year. The specifications for the new build meet all the regulations.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations. The school's website is informative and well organised. All required policies are available online. There has been valuable and ongoing consultation with parents and carers, and other members of the community, over the establishment of the school. Regular termly reports to parents and carers on their children's progress are planned.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision 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 matter:

- comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by producing an up to date fire risk assessment and arranging a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

Recommended number of day pupils: Up to 252 pupils in the present premises, rising to 420 when permanent premises are completed

Recommended age range: 11–16

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed.