

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

School name	New Islington Free School
DfE registration number	352/
Unique reference number (URN)	1429
Inspection number	422325
Inspection dates	11 July 2013
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
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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 New Islington Free School is situated in the heart of a heritage area just to the north of Manchester city centre and close to the Rochdale Canal. It plans to open on 9 September 2013 with 94 pupils between the ages of four and eight years. To date, 94 pupils have been registered for enrolment, one of whom has a statement of special educational needs. Eventually the school plans to admit 210 boys and girls between four and 11 years old. The school intends to be 'open to all' and will admit some disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs. The lead sponsor of the proposed school is the Manchester Grammar School. Initially, it is intended that the proposed school will be housed within a demountable building, due to be installed in early August 2013, on a site close to the school's permanent premises. It is expected that the permanent premises will be ready for use by September 2014. The proposed school has no religious affiliation. It aims to 'create the foundations on which children can build their futures' placing emphasis on, 'the development of their personal skills such as adaptability, resilience, cooperation and respect.'

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the regulations concerning spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Implementation could not be seen as the school has yet to open. The planned personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) policy, together with its overarching planned curriculum, underpins the school's ethos of enabling children to become 'healthier, more independent and more responsible members of society'. The policy places emphasis on the importance of developing self-confidence and self-esteem as well as good relationships with, and respect for, others. Around one quarter of the pupils already registered for enrolment belong to a diverse range of minority ethnic groups. The school intends to use this rich cultural mix to extend pupils' understanding of others' experiences, traditions and beliefs. It also plans to capitalise on its historic surroundings to open pupils' eyes to the area's cultural heritage. Leaders of the proposed school have already formed links with the Hallé orchestra, whose rehearsal rooms are close by, and with two housing associations, one for elderly residents and one for small families. The school intends to build on these links to extend pupils' role within the community. The PSHCE policy

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

specifically highlights as one of its aims that pupils should 'become active, positive members of our democratic society'. Embedded within the school's planned curriculum is that partisan political views will not be promoted in the teaching of any subject. It is planned that pupils will develop an understanding of, and respect for, the civil and criminal law as well as for English institutions and services. It is intended that the creation of a school council, as well as planned visits by a range of speakers, for example from the fire service and a range of different faith groups, will bring pupils' understanding of democracy to life. Through assemblies and the inbuilt assessment opportunities at the end of units of work, it is intended that pupils will have opportunities to reflect on the wider world and on their own progress within, and contribution to, it.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements but, because it has yet to open, its implementation of the regulations could not be seen. Also, because the temporary accommodation is yet to be installed, there is no evidence that a fire risk assessment has taken place. However, the leaders of the proposed school have organised that the fire officer of a fire management company will conduct a fire risk assessment on 3 September 2013, as well as providing fire marshal and fire extinguisher training. They have also met with the fire authority's fire safety enforcement officer who has scrutinised the accommodation plans, to ensure their likely compliance with requirements, and has agreed to visit once the building is complete, and to provide a report. This indicates that the school is likely to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The safeguarding and child protection policy clearly outlines the proposed school's procedures and staff's responsibilities in this area. The arrangements for staff recruitment follow safer recruitment guidance. The designated child protection officer is trained to the required level and it is planned that one of the school's directors, who is a member of Manchester's Safeguarding Children Board, will deliver further training for all staff in August 2013. Admission and attendance registers are ready for use. The school has in place a plan that outlines how it intends to improve access to the premises, curriculum and information for disabled people over the next three years. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide a clear outline of the proposed school's expectations and sanctions. The 'Golden Rules' emphasise the positive, such as 'Do be honest', followed by the negative, 'Do not cover up the truth', thereby also supporting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all the regulations but implementation could not be seen. A full range of checks has been undertaken of all staff currently in post. Initially, two members of staff will not be directly employed by the school; the correct procedures are in place to ensure their suitability to work with children and that of those appointed, or used as supply staff, in the future. Similar checks have been carried out on the proprietors and governors to ensure their suitability. Evidence of the checks is maintained on a single central register which can be accessed by more

than one person but which is held in a confidential manner. The school is aware of its duty to inform the Disclosure and Barring Service should it become aware that any person is deemed unsuitable for working with children.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

Scrutiny of the proposed school's detailed plans, as well as a site visit and extensive discussions with the headteacher and business manager, and with the project director of the Education Funding Agency indicate that, although no building is yet in place, the school is likely to meet all requirements. School leaders and the senior project manager have met with the chairman and other members of the planning committee and are hopeful that planning permission for the temporary accommodation will be granted on 2 August 2013. It is intended that earthworks will begin on 22 July 2013, to prepare the proposed site for delivery of the demountable building on 5 August 2013. The practical completion date is 6 September 2013, three days before the school is due to open, but it is planned that staff will have access to the building in advance of that date. The plans indicate that there will be suitable toilet facilities and access to water, internal and external lighting, classroom and shared spaces, and secure areas for pupils to learn and play outdoors. Suitable space has been identified to cater for the medical needs of pupils. All those spoken with demonstrate awareness of the requirements for compliance and can explain how they intend to ensure that the school fully meets them.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision meets all regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. This school is likely to meet all regulations when it opens and is recommended for registration.**

Recommended number of day pupils: 120

Recommended age range: 4 to 8 years

Recommended gender of pupils: mixed.

The recommended number of pupils relates to the temporary accommodation. The inspector informed leaders of the need to apply to the DfE for a material change, once the school is ready to move to the permanent building.

Note: The Department should obtain confirmation from the school before it opens that the planned risk assessments and building works have been completed.