

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

School name	The Acorn Free School
DfE registration number	999/1448
Unique reference number (URN)	1448
Inspection number	422347
Inspection dates	18 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 Acorn Free School is to be located in a refurbished former primary school in Lincoln. It is planned to open in September 2013 and will be an alternative provision catering for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school will provide part-time placements for up to 48 boys and girls in the age range 11 to 16 years; students will be jointly registered with the free school and with their placing maintained schools. The school will undertake extensive outreach work with local schools and will mostly take students at risk of exclusion from their current schools. Some students will have statements of special educational needs.

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 vision and ethos include a commitment 'to provide a consistent and caring learning environment in which pupils can develop their full academic, personal and social potential ... to promote self-worth, self-esteem and respect ... and to promote self-management of behaviour'. The school's curriculum policy places a strong emphasis on liaison and joint working with placing schools as all students will be registered dually on the roll of the free school and of the placing school. The provision includes a behaviour modification and enrichment programme, which includes aims related to life skills learning, social inclusion and active citizenship.

The citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programmes includes themes related to responsibility and contribution to society; developing an understanding of political opinion in an unbiased way; developing an insight into the workings of civil and criminal law and a commitment to the use of community-based organisations, including police, drugs services, community theatre and youth service projects. A six-week unit, for example, will be included in the curriculum for all students covering local and national government and the role of the local MP. A range of multicultural experiences is planned into the curriculum, including strong links with a local employer who will offer experiences in Indian cooking and links, through a charity, with a school in Pakistan. The school's intention is to develop respect and tolerance for cultural diversity while also providing opportunities for students to contribute to the local and wider community. There is

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

no indication in plans or schemes of work that any political bias will be promoted or tolerated.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that the majority of regulations are likely to be met. There are appropriate and comprehensive policies in place for safeguarding, the prevention of bullying, the management of behaviour, and for first aid. The headteacher is booked on to training as the designated person for child protection to be completed before the school opens. The headteacher has undertaken recent training in safer recruitment and all required procedures have been applied in the recruitment of staff to date. The induction programme for all staff, to be completed before the school opens, includes training in child protection. There are firm arrangements in place for first aid training for all staff and for training as designated first aider for two members of staff, to take place before the school opens. The school's management information system includes software to record details of incidents and sanctions. The admission and attendance registers are also set up to an appropriate structure on this system.

The school has planned well for all aspects of health and safety, including suitable routines for testing and recording all required aspects of fire safety and for the training of all staff to an appropriate level. Premises and fire safety risk assessments have not yet been completed and a fire safety report is yet to be obtained from the local fire authority. A three-year plan to increase accessibility has been prepared.

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 fire safety 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. A suitable single central register of checks on staff and proprietors has been set up to the required structure. Details of all required checks on staff are being added to the register as information becomes available. The school has no intention of employing supply teachers but is aware of the requirements should it do so.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. The school is to be located in the premises of a former local authority primary school. The premises are currently undergoing refurbishment. The work is progressing in line with the plans and

timeline agreed with the developers. The Education Funding Agency is managing the preparation and refurbishment process on behalf of the trustees. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the agency.

The plans, and refurbishment to date, demonstrate the availability of sufficient classrooms for the planned intake, including specialist facilities for the teaching of science, food technology (including facilities for regular preparation and serving of food), design technology and mechanics. New furniture, suitable for the accommodation and for the proposed numbers on roll, is on order and due for delivery in time for the school's planned opening date. There is a room with suitable facilities for medical examination and for use by any student who may be ill. There are sufficient washrooms for boys, girls and staff, together with changing facilities and showers for any physical activities taking place on site. The site has extensive grounds, including hard standing and grass playing fields with well-secured boundaries.

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 fire safety report from the fire authority (paragraph 13).

If registration is recommended, please state:

Recommended number of day pupils: 48

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11–16 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

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