

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

School name	Thetford Alternative Provision Free School
DfE registration number	999/1451
Unique reference number (URN)	1451
Inspection number	422350
Inspection dates	15 July 2013
Reporting inspector	David Young

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 Thetford Alternative Provision Free School is to be located in Thetford, Norfolk, in the premises of a former local authority sixth form centre. The school is sponsored by The Alternative Provision Thetford Free School Trust Ltd. The premises are due for partial refurbishment to be completed for occupation in January 2014. The new free school will occupy temporary premises during the autumn term 2013 at a building owned by the Guide and Scout Association. The school will provide up to 20 full-time places for boys and girls in the age range 11 to 16 years during its first year of operation; increasing to up to 40 full-time places in subsequent years. Students will have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and will be excluded, or at risk of exclusion, from their current school. Students will be placed at the school by local maintained schools or by the local authority. The school will be non-selective and a number of 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 the regulations. The school's policies set out to create an environment in which all are valued and students are helped to take responsibility for their own actions. The behaviour policy includes a commitment to enabling students to 'tell the truth, take responsibility and acknowledge harm, as appropriate responses to conflict and in doing so to create accountability'. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students will be supported by the programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) provided for all students in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Themes within this programme include an understanding of healthy lifestyles and emotional health, and the impact of anti-social behaviour. All students will be provided with opportunities to contribute to the local community through volunteering and community service. The school will, for example take part in the maintenance of the national cycle route network.

Students will be encouraged to take part in charitable collections based on national campaigns and causes of their own choice. The school has established a number of relationships with local public services, including the police and fire services, and will make use of facilities such as the library and local leisure facilities, so that students will have a good understanding of these. The PSHE programme also includes themes which will enable students to understand and develop respect for cultural and

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

religious diversity, including the celebration of festivals and preparing food from a variety of cultures. Students will be prepared for the responsibilities of adult life in areas such as the management of money, being aware of civil and criminal law, voting in democratic elections, and the transition from home to independent living. The curriculum presents a balanced view of political and social issues and is free from bias and partisanship.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentary evidence indicates that the majority of regulations are likely to be met. The school has prepared all the required policy documents, including policies and procedures for the safeguarding of students, safe recruitment of staff, the management of behaviour, the prevention of bullying and first aid. All policies and procedures are thorough and comprehensive. The headteacher and an additional senior member of staff have been trained to an appropriate standard as senior designated person for child protection; they are also trained in safe recruitment. There are firm plans in place for eight days of induction training for staff before the school opens, including child protection training. One member of staff is trained to the required level to act as designated first aider and first aid training for all staff is included in the planned training programme.

Admission and attendance registers are to be maintained on a commercial electronic database which meets requirements. Health and safety and fire safety policies are in place, taking account of both the temporary and permanent accommodation. These include appropriate plans for the production of premises and fire risk assessments, which have not yet been produced. A fire safety report has not yet been obtained from the fire authority. The school has not yet produced a three-year accessibility plan in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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 satisfactory fire risk assessment and a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13)
- produce a three-year plan to increase accessibility as required by the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school's procedures for the appointment of staff and implementation to date indicate that all the regulations are likely to be met. A single central register has been prepared to an appropriate structure and details of all checks on proprietors and on staff appointed to date have been entered. Additional entries are being made as checks are completed. The school has no plans to employ supply staff.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the regulations. The temporary premises are ready for immediate occupation and meet all the regulations. There are sufficient rooms, of a suitable size for teaching the temporary curriculum in the first term, together with sufficient furniture available on the temporary school site. There are suitable separate washrooms for use by boys, girls and staff, together with a suitable medical room and disabled toilet facilities. There are sufficient showers for the number of students on roll during the first term. The premises include appropriate facilities for the preparation and serving of food. There is sufficient outside space for play and recreation and suitable arrangements are planned for the adequate supervision of students. The buildings are fully secure.

The permanent facilities, due for occupation in January 2014, will be available for refurbishment to commence in mid-September. A timeline for completion of the refurbishment has been agreed with the Education Funding Agency, the Department's delivery agent, which is managing the refurbishment process on behalf of the trust. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the Agency. There are sufficient washrooms already available and sufficient showers are included in the refurbishment plans. There are suitable facilities for any student who may be ill and for the medical examination of students. Classrooms are of sufficient size and plans show how the refurbishment will include specialist facilities for science, food studies and design technology. New furniture is to be provided as shown in the school's building plans. The site includes sufficient outside space for play and recreation, including hard surfaced areas and playing fields. The buildings and access points to the site 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 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 satisfactory fire risk assessment and a report from the fire authority (paragraph 13)
- produce a three-year plan to increase accessibility as required by the Equality Act 2010.

Recommended number of day pupils: 40

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.