

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

School name	Khalsa Secondary Academy
DfE registration number	N/A
Unique reference number	1463
Inspection number	422368
Inspection dates	30 July 2013
Reporting inspector	Caroline Bolton

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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 Khalsa Secondary Academy will be situated in Stoke Poges, near Slough. This free school is scheduled to open in September 2013 as a non-selective mixed school in an area in which secondary education in the maintained sector is selective. The sponsor is the Slough Sikh Education Trust. The aim is for an eventual roll of 840 students, aged from 11 to 19 years, but in the first year students will be admitted in Year 7 only. At the time of this inspection visit, 101 applications had been accepted; none of the intended pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The maximum number of places available in Year 7 is 120. The building has, until now, provided office space for a large international company which is about to move to another site. The accommodation is spacious and of high quality, with plenty of natural light. Work is now under way to modify the interior space to meet the needs of the new school. The pleasant and extensive grounds have both grassed and hard surfaces that should be adaptable to a range of leisure and sports activities, as well as providing car parking spaces and a drop-off zone for school buses. The school will occupy this site for 2013/14 in the first instance, but its leaders hope that it will become a permanent location.

This will be a Sikh faith school, but it will admit pupils from non-Sikh backgrounds. Its stated aim is 'to serve all members of the Sikh community and those of other faiths or no faith, who support and respect the religious ethos of the school'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Most regulations are likely to be met, although the provision could not be seen in implementation. The school's vision statement emphasises its values of integrity, honesty, self-discipline, inclusiveness and charity, together with respect for all faiths and the personal journey towards self-discovery through reflection and meditation. The importance of self-discipline is also clear in the school's Behaviour for Learning policy. Sanctions for misconduct are identified but there is a strong focus on positive encouragement of good behaviour and on support and parental involvement should serious problems arise.

In planning for the induction of its first intake, the school has taken account of the need to increase the pupils' confidence and sense of continuity in their education.

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

The Principal has visited all feeder primary schools and the academy staff have set holiday work as the basis of their first lessons with Year 7. A Learning for Life programme is planned, in which students will meet topics often covered elsewhere as personal, social and health education and citizenship. A component of the programme will be Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), with opportunities for discussion of, and reflection on, the issues and concerns that may arise during the transition into secondary education. It will include giving pupils an insight into the workings of public institutions. There are plans for a broad range of activities to engage the pupils in fostering good relations with the local community, in which there has been significant opposition to the school's opening.

The school day will be unusually long, beginning at 8.00am and ending at 4.45pm. However, this includes timetabled enrichment activities and sports to close four of the five school days each week. These sessions offer a diverse range of opportunities which have been planned to make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to include traditional activities associated with the Sikh faith. The programme includes activities designed to give pupils a respect for a wide range of cultures and faiths besides their own. Understanding of how democracy works will be increased by chances to stand for membership of the school council and to vote for representatives. Policy and planning documents emphasise the importance of giving pupils clear guidance on right and wrong behaviour. There is planning in place to invite visitors, including local police officers, to speak with the pupils but the curriculum is not yet detailed enough to show exactly how they will gain an understanding of, and respect for, the civil and criminal law. There are no indications from the planning evidence seen that any biased political views will be promoted or acceptable within the school.

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

- show clearly in its curricular planning how it will enable pupils to respect the civil and criminal law (paragraph 5(a)(ii)).

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet most of the regulations, although implementation could not be seen. The policies for health and safety, safer recruitment, first aid and prevention of bullying are detailed and take account of relevant government guidance. The policy for health and safety on educational visits is very detailed.

Training in safeguarding was scheduled for all staff in the week of this inspection visit so that requirements are likely to be met. The Principal, as the designated person for child protection, is due to attend the required further training in September this year prior to the school opening. Job specifications make reference to staff responsibilities in safeguarding. However, the policy for safeguarding, while generally detailed and helpful, does not refer to possible signs of female genital mutilation and the appropriate school response to suspicions or evidence of it.

The first aid policy covers most requirements, although it does not have clear guidance on when staff should send for an emergency ambulance or otherwise transfer sick or injured individuals to hospital. Medical care plans are to be drawn up for any pupils who have specific medical needs. Two of the staff appointed are qualified in first aid and it is planned that two more will be trained in September 2013.

The school has a large drive, with two gateways to allow for one-way traffic if required. Many pupils are expected to arrive on school buses and there is a suitable dropping-off space outside the main entrance, as well as secure external gates to limit access by unauthorised vehicles. However, there is no dedicated pedestrian route from the gates to the school entrance and this presents potential hazards when cars, buses and walkers mingle, particularly at the start and end of the school day. The building is due to be handed over by the contractors at the end of August 2013, at which stage it is planned that risk assessments for the buildings and for a range of school activities will be drawn up. The fire authorities have made a visit to the premises and their report is in preparation, so that requirements are likely to be met. There is a suitable policy for fire safety procedures and the staff are scheduled to have fire safety training in early September, before the school opens to pupils. The site manager, who has been employed by the company occupying the building, has transferred to the school staff and he is suitably trained in taking preventative and protective measures against fire hazards. A fire evacuation practice is scheduled to take place in the first week of the autumn term.

The space which the school will use in its first year has suitable provision for disabled access and there is an accessibility plan with short, medium and long-term elements but it does not cover the required three-year timescale.

In order to meet the requirements in full the school should:

- ensure that the safeguarding policy deals with all required aspects of child abuse, including female genital mutilation (paragraph 7)
- carry out risk assessments for the building and for students' activities on the site as soon as possible after the works are completed and ensure that pedestrians are able to enter the premises by a route that keeps them separate from cars and buses in the driveways (paragraph 11)
- include in the first aid policy clear guidance about when an ambulance should be called or a student otherwise taken to hospital (paragraph 14)
- review the accessibility plan to ensure it meets the requirement for a three-year span.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school does not meet all requirements as some outcomes of the checking processes are still awaited. For members of staff, trustees and governors on whom

the verifications are completed, the information on the central register is appropriately recorded. Checks are made of individuals' identities, qualifications, medical fitness and right to work in the United Kingdom; they are also made with the Disclosure and Barring Service, using the relatively new online facility. However, the checking and therefore the recording of information have not been completed for all staff and trustees because the teacher recruitment process has been on-going and some outcomes are awaited. Moreover, the school has moved from the older method of checking with the Criminal Records Bureau to the online system. A decision was made that all personnel should be vetted using the newer method and the school reports that the process is not yet finished in respect of some trustees who have already been cleared using the old disclosure system. The single central register is not therefore complete. The school has no immediate intention of employing supply staff but is aware of the procedures for checking should it do so.

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

- complete all the required checks on staff and trustees and update the single central register as soon as the required information is available (paragraphs 19(2)(a), 19(2)(b), 19(3), 21(6)(a), 21(6)(b), 22(3), 22(6)).

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the requirements. It will be housed in a modern building, formerly office accommodation, with spacious rooms and ample natural light. Refurbishment work has begun and will include the addition of partition walls to create a number of classrooms in what is now a large, open-plan space. The canteen is large, attractive and functional, having been used as an eating area in the past and with additional relaxation or discussion space that includes wiring for a plasma screen. In its first year of operation, the school will be housed on the ground floor, the only area to be refurbished this summer, because it is presently uncertain whether this building will be permanent accommodation. There is a lift already installed to enable disabled access to the upper floor, but the upper floor will not be accessible to the pupils at this stage.

There are suitable toilets and washing facilities, separate for male and female users, and there is a toilet with access for users with disabilities. These amenities were provided for the adults who have used the building in the past and it is planned to make changes to make them suitable for use by young people, providing signage to warn that the water is not for drinking and carrying out checks on the temperature of washing water. Separately from the toilet areas, there are two drinking water stations planned for pupils' use. A room with washing facilities, suitably close to toilet facilities, has been designated as a medical room.

For break periods, there is ample social space surrounding the building, including both grassed and hard surfaces. There are substantial fences, with security gates at the two vehicle entrances. The school has arranged to use a local sports centre with shower and changing facilities as its own specialist facilities are limited at present.

There are, however, plans to turn one of the existing car parks into games courts and there is a large field with further potential for use as a sports pitch. The school is aware that shower facilities will be needed if the on-site facilities are used for physical education in the future.

Provision of information

The school must meet the regulations identified in the check sheet.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school must meet all the regulations identified in the check sheet.

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 matters detailed below:

- the school should show clearly in its curricular planning how it will enable pupils to respect the civil and criminal law (paragraph 5(a)(ii))
- ensure that the safeguarding policy deals with all required aspects of child abuse, including female genital mutilation (paragraph 7)
- carry out risk assessments for the building and for students' activities on the site as soon as possible after the works are completed and ensure that pedestrians are able to enter the premises by a route that keeps them separate from cars and buses in the driveways (paragraph 11)
- include in the first aid policy clear guidance about when an ambulance should be called or a student otherwise taken to hospital (paragraph 14)
- review the accessibility plan to ensure it meets the requirement for a three-year span
- complete all the required checks on staff and trustees and update the single central register as soon as the required information is available (paragraphs 19(2)(a), 19(2)(b), 19(3), 21(6)(a), 21(6)(b), 22(3), 22(6))
- include in the information to parents and others the school's address (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- include in the information to parents and others details regarding the exclusions policy, information regarding the health and safety policy with respect to the school premises, sufficient curriculum information and information on the number of staff and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b))

- state that the school will make the findings and recommendations with respect to complaints available to the relevant parties (paragraph 25(i)).

Recommended number of day pupils: 840

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11 to 19 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Not applicable.