

Advice note for pre-registration inspections of all types of academies and free schools/studio schools/university technical colleges (UTC)

School name	Abacus Belsize Primary School
DfE registration number	N/A
Unique reference number (URN)	1465
Inspection number	422370
Inspection dates	15 July 2013
Reporting inspector	Helena McVeigh

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 Abacus Belsize Primary Free School is to be located for two years in the Hampstead Town Hall on Haverstock Hill, where it will share the building with WAC Performing Arts and Media College. The plan is to open in September 2013 in this building, following some minor adaptations of the current space, and to move to a permanent site in the same area within the Belsize ward by September 2015. The location of the new site has not yet been confirmed.

The school will be part of the CfBT Schools Trust family of schools. Its aim is to 'encourage pupils to develop their full potential in a stimulating and caring environment'. The planned curriculum will include Mandarin alongside other National Curriculum subjects and will emphasise outdoor learning. The motto of the proposed school is the Chinese proverb, 'I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.'

The school has applied to be registered for up to 210 boys and girls in the age range four to 11 years, when in its permanent site. The plan is to admit up to 30 pupils to a Reception class in September 2013 and then to grow each year, one class at a time until the school is full in 2019/20. The school is prepared to admit pupils with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language.

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 has planned a personal, social and emotional development programme for its pupils, which includes topics such as teamwork and respect for self, for others and for authority, including the rule of law. A parent group helped to devise the school's code of conduct known as ROPES which stands for 'respect for others, property, the environment and self'. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies reinforce the commitment to promoting self-discipline and respect. The behaviour policy includes a section entitled, 'School/home, pupil and parent promises', which sets out the expectations for pupils, parents, carers and staff.

The school's planned themes and assemblies should provide many opportunities to effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The

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

assemblies are scheduled to include opportunities for pupils to learn about and respect different religious beliefs, including festivals such as Wesak, Divali and Eid. There are to be trips to local places of worship. The school has already made contact with a primary school in Beijing, so that pupils can communicate via email. Themes such as responsibility and working cooperatively are included in the school's plans along with opportunities to learn about the civil and criminal law and public institutions and services. The school has established a link with the nearby Royal Free Hospital as well as with local shops and community groups. Art and music are to be a regular part of the curriculum and trips to galleries and museums will be included.

The school has indicated in its document that sets out its aims and values, a commitment to ensuring that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject and that balanced views are presented at all times.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The regulations are likely to be met in full, although implementation could not be seen as the school is not in operation. All of the required policy documents have been prepared, generally adapted from those provided by the CfBT Schools Trust for all its schools. There are appropriate policies for safeguarding, safer recruitment, behaviour, anti-bullying and first aid. The teaching staff have been trained in child protection and safeguarding to the necessary level and there are plans to include first-aid training and safeguarding training for all staff in the first week of term as part of their induction. The Camden local authority team of preferred trainers has been booked for the training.

Governors have been appointed and there are plans for them to undertake safer recruitment training before school starts in September. The staff already recruited were selected by CfBT personnel who have had safer recruitment training. The Trust has a safeguarding board and officer to support its schools and monitor compliance.

There are suitable policies for all required aspects of health and safety, risk assessment and for fire safety. A fire safety risk assessment has been carried out along with fire evacuation drills in the Town Hall building, with firm plans to have a further fire safety report once the building adaptations have been completed. The proposal is for one of the teaching assistants to act as fire warden for the school.

The school plans to maintain electronic admission and attendance registers using a web-based management information system, printing out hard copies regularly as required. Staff will record attendance on ipads each day. Pupils will be well supervised as initially there will be four adults overseeing 30 pupils, which will enable small groups to work in different rooms in the first year at least. There are plans to involve parents and carers in accompanying staff and pupils to the nearby parks each week so as to increase the level of supervision even further.

The school fulfils all its duties under the Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate generic accessibility improvement plan which is being personalised for the school. In addition, the building is already adapted for wheelchair access to all parts of the proposed school and there is a disabled toilet.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All requirements are likely to be met. The school has prepared a suitable single central register, based on a CfBT template, and has entered information appropriately for the staff already appointed: the headteacher, Reception class teacher and two teaching assistants. They are awaiting Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the reception teacher and teaching assistants. The Trust has a system whereby its Human Resources department also scrutinises information after it has been checked in the school. The required checks have been made on the proprietors and there are plans to undertake criminal record checks on all governors. The school does not plan to use supply staff, but if it does, the Trust has an agreement with a supply agency and will ensure that all correct checks have been carried out.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all the regulations. The school is to be located in part of Hampstead Town Hall, which is currently home to the WAC Performing Arts and Media College. The building also houses the Camden University of the Third Age. The proposed free school will have a separate secure entrance at the side of the building and access to the free school rooms will be restricted by the use of electronic door fobs. The minor modifications to the existing building are well underway to provide one classroom, a room for small-group work, an office and a space for the Reception class in the large atrium. The atrium will include a sliding partition so that the whole of the area can be used by WAC in the evenings and at weekends.

There are suitable toilets and washing facilities for pupils and for staff. Drinking water is planned to be provided by water coolers. The headteacher's office, which has a sink and an adjacent toilet, will double as a medical room. The headteacher will be teaching for a good proportion of the time and, if not teaching, can access information on her computer from anywhere in the building, so that the room can be free.

There is a small but adequate and secure outdoor area next to the atrium, which is planned to be used for daily outdoor play activities by the Reception class. The school plans to make regular use – twice per week – of the nearby Belsize Wood and Hampstead Heath as part of its focus on outdoor learning. There are also a number of other suitable large spaces in the Town Hall which the school plans to negotiate using for indoor physical education next year.

The rooms have a reasonable amount of natural light and a good light level was included as part of the specification for the building contractor. The school is planning to install a noise reduction curtain in the atrium.

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

Is registration recommended?

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

Recommended number of pupils: 60 (in the current accommodation)

Recommended age range: 4–6

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Not applicable.