

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

School name	Route 39 Free School
DfE registration number	NA
Unique reference number (URN)	1466
Inspection number	422371
Inspection dates	3 July 2013
Reporting inspector	Mick Pye

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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.

Context of the school

The school is scheduled to open this September on a temporary site in Higher Clovelly. It will use the old village school building, which is about to be refurbished. A new school is scheduled to be built over the next two years. The school will move to the new site alongside the main A39 road to Bideford. The old school will then be vacated. Both sites have been chosen to meet the aim of the school to be a rural, non-selective secondary school. Initiated by a group of parents, the school intends to make learning very relevant to pupils. It will focus on the development of coaching skills alongside restorative approaches and a strong emphasis on personal responsibility and the development of positive relationships. The school has applied to be registered for 700 boys and girls aged 11 to 18. It has a total of 64 applications for entry this September into Years 7 and 8. Six pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Documentation, including various curriculum policies, indicates that most requirements are likely to be met, but implementation was not seen. The school motto of 'Engage, Respect, Aspire' reflects the care with which the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils has been considered. Aspiration is directly encouraged through the visits of the 'Fellows' – people who have achieved well in their own fields of expertise. Through the school's one-to-one coaching approach, pupils will be encouraged to grow in self-esteem and confidence. The extended curriculum presents opportunities for pupils to stretch their experience, use their initiative and grow their expertise. The detailed behaviour and anti-bullying policies reinforce the expectation of mutual respect, positive relationships and taking responsibility. Project work presents a chance for team building and adds further to the moral and social development of pupils. Religious education will be delivered through the philosophy and ethics learning sessions. These give pupils opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures, diversity and to celebrate the individual, but also to discuss other issues of interest to them, including respect for the civil law. Citizenship and democratic principles are part of the curriculum, and elected school councillors will participate in decision making within the school. The commitment to ensuring a balanced view when discussing political issues is not made clear enough in policy and promotional documentation. Links with schools in the United Kingdom and abroad are already being built and these, together with the developing strong community links, such as with the elderly, will aid the local, national and multi-cultural knowledge of pupils. The rural site of the school buildings has been

deliberately chosen to give opportunities for pupils to involve themselves in outdoor experiences; this provides excellent opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils.

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

- ensure that in school there is an awareness of the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues (paragraph 5(c)(i))
- ensure that in extra-curricular activities provided or organised by or on behalf of the school the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues is made clear (paragraph 5(c)(ii))
- ensure that in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere, that the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues is made clear (paragraph 5(c)(iii)).

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Documentation, building plans and policies indicate that most requirements are likely to be met. Detailed policies have been written and provide good guidance as to how the school will maintain pupils' welfare, health and safety. The behaviour policy strongly emphasises the importance of relationships, social responsibility and the adoption of the consequences approach to any misbehaviour. This approach is shortly to be reinforced through the motivational speaker 'Scary Guy', who will look at personal responsibility and the repercussions of anti-social behaviour such as bullying. Child protection, safe recruitment and safeguarding policies are detailed. A designated child protection officer and a deputy have been identified. Both have been appropriately trained. There are clear plans to deliver relevant training to staff prior to the start of the school year. One member of staff has already had training to fulfil the duties of first aider and fire marshal. Representatives of the local fire safety department are scheduled to visit the old school to ensure that fire regulations are met. A fire assessment has been carried out but there are aspects of fire safety still to be addressed; testing of emergency lighting, renewal of fire extinguishers, the identification of a safe external assembly point for pupils, and who is responsible for taking registers out of the building when the fire alarm is activated. In both the old school and the new build, there are suitable arrangements for access by disabled pupils, but the school has yet to develop a three-year accessibility plan. A detailed health and safety policy has been drawn up with clear roles and responsibilities. However, the school is required to address the need for the drop-off and pick-up area, near to the old school, to have road markings to indicate safe crossing areas for pupils as well as safe assembly points.

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

- ensure that line markings at the drop-off and pick-up area show safe pathways for pupils and where the safe pupil-assembly point(s) is/are situated (paragraph 7)

- develop a fire risk assessment to show the assembly point and register arrangements in the case of a fire, and clarify arrangements for testing of emergency lighting and renewal of fire extinguishers (paragraph 13)
- produce a three-year accessibility plan in order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Most requirements are likely to be met. A single central register has been drawn up and appointed staff and governors have already been checked for their suitability to work with children. Where one proposed member of staff has worked abroad, then the appropriate American authorities are being provided with fingerprints to establish identity and background. There are secure procedures for ensuring that references are collected prior to the interview, and that contractors, volunteers and supply staff have their identity confirmed and have received the appropriate barring checks. The single central register does not presently show that the school has received written confirmation about these checks. Confidentiality of information has been met through a policy declaration, data encryption and lockable cabinets.

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

- ensure that in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register clearly shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the necessary suitability checks on their employees (paragraph 22(5)).

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The chosen sites for the school are situated in beautiful rural surroundings. A site visit to the old school, the new site and the examination of plans suggest that most requirements are likely to be met. Good attention has been paid to issues of accessibility for pupils – whether at the new or old site. Pupils will be escorted to and from the buses with appropriate attention to road safety issues. The local parish hall is also to be used as a resource. The old school building has two floors and will mirror the type of accommodation proposed at the new site. There are to be large areas with 'break-out' rooms attached, and the new build will have appropriate science, physical education and practical areas. The old school has playgrounds within the walls, while outdoor sport can take place on the nearby playing field. Changing facilities and showers are planned in the new build, and the parish hall near the old school has adequate showering facilities and separate changing rooms for girls and boys. Appropriate attention has been paid to the provision of lighting and acoustics in the old build while these aspects are part of the building specifications for the new. There are sufficient washrooms and attention has been paid to ensuring that water temperatures are kept safe. Drinking water will be provided from the small kitchen area in the old building. Signage for this has yet to be put in place. There is an appropriate medical room. Around the old school

building, there are sufficient lights, but at the front of the building the road is unlit and, given the extended school day, there is a need for more illumination to aid the safety of pupils on the road. The Department of Education will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the school trust.

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

- ensure that adequate external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the premises (paragraph 23E(b))
- ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 23F(1)(c)).

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to most of the regulations.

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

- outline in the complaints policy that the three people attending the panel meeting must not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25(f))
- outline in the policy that one person on the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- outline in the policy that written records are to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j)).

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:**
- ensure that in school there is an awareness of the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues (paragraph 5(c)(i))

- ensure that in extra-curricular activities provided or organised by or on behalf of the school the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues is made clear (paragraph 5(c)(ii))
- ensure that in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere that the requirement to present a balanced view when discussing political issues is made clear (paragraph 5(c)(iii))
- ensure that line markings at the drop-off and pick-up area show safe pathways for pupils and where the safe pupil-assembly point(s) is/are situated (paragraph 7)
 - develop a fire risk assessment to show the assembly point and register arrangements in the case of a fire and clarify arrangements for testing of emergency lighting and renewal of fire extinguishers (paragraph 13)
 - produce a three-year accessibility plan in order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- ensure that in relation to staff not directly employed by the school, the register clearly shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that it has carried out the necessary suitability checks on their employees (paragraph 22(5))
- ensure that adequate external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the premises (paragraph 23E(b))
- ensure that cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 23F(1)(c))
- outline in the complaints policy that the three people attending the panel meeting must not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25(f))
- outline in the policy that one person on the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- outline in the policy that written records are to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j)).

Recommended number of day pupils: 700

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 11–18

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/A.