

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

School name	Bristol Free School
DfE registration number	801/7251
Unique reference number (URN)	1120
Inspection number	384959
Inspection dates	1 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Ken Bush

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Context of the school

Bristol Free School is a proposed mixed secondary day school in Westbury-on-Trym in north-west Bristol. For the academic year 2011–12, the school will be located in one wing of a former government building. The trustees of the proposed school are currently in negotiation with Bristol City Council and the Department for Education as to whether this site will be permanent. If not, an alternative site within the local area has been identified and there are ongoing discussions as to its viability.

The proposed school is intended to admit up to 750 students aged from 11–16. From September 2011, however, only Year 7 students will be admitted. The school has no religious affiliation. The headteacher and 11 teaching staff have now been appointed. As staffing currently exceeds the requirements for the anticipated student numbers for September, no teaching assistants have been appointed. A senior administrator/finance officer took up appointment in August 2011; other administrative functions are temporarily provided through the auspices of the trustees.

Support for a new school in the 'BS9' area of Bristol was formalised in 2009 with the establishment of a group known as 'Parents' Voice'. It states that its aim is to create 'a high quality, secular and genuinely comprehensive state secondary school that our children can walk to with the friends that they made at primary school, ending the break-up of community and friendships as our children are currently scattered across more than 20 secondary schools'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The requirements of this standard are likely to be met, subject to satisfactory implementation through the planned curriculum, notably that for personal, social and health education and for citizenship. The school's extensive and well-conceived plans to focus on high standards of behaviour for all put a particular emphasis on the need for students to develop their self-confidence and self-awareness, to take responsibility for their conduct and be aware of the implications of their actions for others. Students will learn about cultural and religious diversity both in the United Kingdom and overseas through the humanities curriculum, including religious education, and through arrangements for collective worship. There are well-considered plans to develop students' understanding of public institutions and services in England.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

All requirements are likely to be met, although implementation of the school's policies could not be seen. All arrangements for ensuring that students are adequately safeguarded are clearly in place and compliant with current requirements.

The headteacher is the designated person responsible for safeguarding and has already received the requisite child protection training, along with one other member of the senior team. Plans are in place to provide child protection training to all the newly-appointed staff in late August, prior to the planned opening of the school. The headteacher has been appropriately vetted by the trustees and has himself undertaken 'Safer Recruitment' training. All appointments of new staff have been made in accordance with the protocols of best practice in safer recruitment. Owing to the new building and refurbishment currently taking place on the proposed school site, clearance from the fire safety authorities has not yet been received, but an inspection is booked for a date prior to the official 'handover' by the building contractors. Detailed arrangements for emergency site evacuation will be confirmed at that point, acting upon advice received, although outline plans are evident in the school documentation. The trustees and headteacher have made site security for the proposed new school a high priority and comprehensive plans are in place to ensure both pedestrian and vehicular access are well regulated and supervised. This is also the case for access for students to the sporting facilities which are adjacent to, but not part of, the proposed school site. The new and refurbished accommodation is presently at ground floor level, but ramping is in place to ensure access for all students and site-users. No students requiring special access arrangements are expected in September. Nevertheless, the premises are being adapted to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the required three-year plan to further improve access is being prepared. Appropriate policies to address anti-bullying, health and safety, first aid and off-site educational activities are in place. There is a designated first aider on the appointed school staff.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All requirements are likely to be met. A single central record is in place which covers all the required checks for all staff and trustees/proprietary body. At the time of the inspection, clearance for two members of the teaching staff was still awaited, but the headteacher was able to demonstrate a clear awareness of the procedures required should clearance not be received prior to the school's planned opening. The headteacher is also aware of the checking procedures needed for the future use of supply staff if necessary.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

All requirements are likely to be met. The small wing of this former government building will house specialist teaching accommodation for science, design and technology, arts subjects, a hall/dining area, several small rooms for group/intervention work and a dedicated medical room, along with student washrooms and office/recreational space for staff. Adjacent to the wing on a large tarmac area, five mobile classrooms are to be erected for general use, each of which will have separate washroom facilities. Overall, the minimum requirements for washrooms are comfortably met. The tarmac area will also provide ample safe hard-surface play space for students. An adjacent meadow is being prepared as an additional play area and resource to support aspects of the curriculum. There are no

plans at present to prepare any hot food on site as this will be conveyed from a nearby partner primary school; the general food preparation area is likely to be fit for purpose. The buildings are likely to meet the regulations for heating, lighting, ventilation, decoration and floor coverings.

Scrutiny of plans, together with discussion with the headteacher, trustees and the project manager, indicates that all building/refurbishment requirements will be met on time, including the provision of good quality age-appropriate furniture and fittings. The headteacher and trustees have also prepared detailed contingency plans so that if there are delays on the building/refurbishment work, the school could function safely on the planned opening date with minimal disruption to the curriculum.

Provision of information

The school has constructed a website which provides parents with all the information required, except for the safeguarding policy and the planned assessment, recording and reporting arrangements. The school has confirmed that all of these will be in place before the planned opening. Hard copies of all documents will be provided for parents as required. Consequently, 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 once the complaints procedure has been published to parents; this is planned to occur before the school opens in September.

Recommendation to the Department for Education Registration

Is registration recommended?

YES. The school is likely to meet all regulations and is recommended for registration.

For number of day pupils: 750

For age range: 11–16

For gender of pupils: Mixed