

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

School name	Cobham Free School
DfE registration number	To be advised
Unique reference number (URN)	To be advised
Inspection number	403962
Inspection dates	18 July 2012
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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Context of the school

The Cobham Free School plans to open in September 2012 as a mixed, one-form entry, non-denominational school with provision for children aged between the ages of four and eleven years. In its first year there will be provision for 69 places, being made up of 23 places in Reception and 46 in Years 1 and 2. From September 2013, numbers will increase. By 2016 all class groups up to Year 6 will be open. When the school is full there will be 161 places available.

For the academic year 2012–13, the school will be located temporarily for up to six weeks in a former gospel hall building before moving into three new mobile classrooms, which (subject to the final planning permission) will be located on the grounds of a recently-closed police station in Cobham. The school will retain use of the gospel hall on a lease basis until September 2013 to provide further school space before the new building is completed. The police station is being significantly modified with the inclusion of additional new adjoining accommodation. The school has also acquired the use of a large field, which will be used for sports and recreational purposes from September 2013; a new pavilion with lavatory facilities is due to be erected on the field before the school opens. The headteacher, deputy and two other full-time staff have already been appointed. In addition, two part-time staff have been appointed. A full governing body is in place and the school has a business manager.

The school's mission is 'Optimum Omnibus' meaning 'the best for all'. The school sees that its mission is to provide an excellent, balanced education which is available to everyone in the Cobham community, irrespective of their background. It intends to develop confident independent learners who reach their potential; raising levels of attainment in basic skills, as well ensuring wide and rich learning experiences. There will be a special focus on music, foreign languages and sports. Partnership links with parents and carers will be a high priority, so that they can support their children's learning.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The requirements of this standard are likely to be met, subject to the satisfactory implementation of the planned curriculum. The school's intended ethos is to ensure very high standards of behaviour and respect for others. The personal, social, health and economic education programme is intended to help pupils to develop an awareness of themselves, through their own and others' beliefs by the study of six major world religions. Plans are already underway to link learning into many different subjects of the curriculum, so that pupils explore their emotions and views in different meaningful ways. This overall programme will securely promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development if implemented effectively.

Social development will be further promoted by a range of sports. Several staff have degree-level qualifications in such subjects as French, German and Russian. The school plans to teach French and Latin. The school will be working closely with the Yehudi Menuhin School, which will be providing free instruments and further teaching support once the school opens. The headteacher is a music specialist. Visits and assembly activities are intended to enrich pupils' spiritual understanding of the world in which the pupils live, so they will appreciate traditions and cultures other than their own. Speakers and further visits are planned to help pupils to understand public institutions and services in England.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

All policies relating to welfare, health, safety and safeguarding are in place and are compliant with current requirements, subject to implementation, so that all the regulations are likely to be met. Already, one member of staff is fully trained as a designated child protection officer. Plans are underway to train another member of staff at this level for the beginning of the autumn term. All appointed staff have received first-aid training and this will be repeated for others who join later. Specialist paediatric first-aid training is also planned. All staff will receive training in safeguarding procedures prior to the school opening in September so that requirements are met. The school has provided confirmation that the training will be completed before the school opens, and will send the appropriate evidence to the Department for Education (DfE), so that the requirements will be met in full. The Principal and chair of governors have undertaken safer recruitment training. Criminal Records Bureau checks are in place for staff already appointed to the school and the single central register recording all of the information is securely in place.

The school has in place detailed policies and procedures ready to assess and manage health and safety risks around the school site, as the school gains access to each new section and to ensure safety during modifications. Currently, plans are ready for the fire checks, in line with requirements, and checks are due to be carried out before the start of the term when the temporary and longer-term accommodation is ready. Due to the fact that the school only acquired the final agreement to use and modify the gospel hall the night before this visit, the school is still at a very early stage in working on the plans to ensure safe emergency evacuation of the building in the case of fire, but this will be completed before the opening.

The school has produced a clear behaviour and anti-bullying policy, which sets out high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves in and around school. The policy identifies suitable sanctions and rewards. It identifies different kinds of bullying and how to manage these if they should occur. Appropriate attendance and admission procedures are already in place, making effective use of a comprehensive computer program. Building modifications fully reflect the needs of disabled people and are likely to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school has a clear and detailed three-year development plan in place to make these improvements.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All appointed staff are appropriately vetted and these checks are captured in a single central record which includes volunteers and all members of the governing body. In its first year the school does not intend to employ supply staff but, should the need arise, appropriate protocols are in place to meet the regulations. All requirements are likely to be met. Many staff are very highly qualified at Oxbridge level, with wide-ranging additional qualifications that enrich their qualified teacher status.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

A considerable programme of refurbishment of the temporary and longer-term buildings is planned over the summer. Scrutiny of the architect's plans and schedule of works, together with a visit to the sites, confirmed that the premises are likely to meet the regulations in readiness for opening in September with the initial intake.

Suitable consideration has been given to the planned installation of toilet facilities, especially for children in the Reception class, so that the school meets the required ratio. Provision for the outside learning area is being supplemented by use of a large outside learning area based on the field, which children will be walking to (all safety requirements of this are likely to be met). Furniture, fixtures and fittings have been tendered in readiness to set up the learning space quickly; these are likely to meet requirements. The building has suitable access for those with disabilities to the ground floor. The new building will have a lift. A medical room is planned to be an integral part of the new administrative suite and will be suitably equipped. All requirements are likely to be met.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all of the regulations. One member of the governing body is highly skilled in website technology, so that parents and carers will be able to access information online. In addition, there are regular transition meetings planned to help children and their parents to feel included in the school and know what to expect. All children, for example, have been given a small teddy bear and personal mini-sized letter. This invites them to take the teddy wherever they go during the summer and to make a scrap book ready to share at the beginning of the new school year. Plans are already in place to have regular meetings with parents and carers about how their children are settling in and progressing in the autumn term and beyond. The school's prospectus and other letters, provide all the required information to parents and carers. Documents are impressively presented, setting the tone for the future. All are linked to the vision of the school that, 'Every child will be cherished and valued as a member of a nurturing family'. All policies are currently accessible to parents at any time.

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 subject to full compliance with the DfE statutory requirement for the full fire check, especially ensuring that emergency evacuation can be accomplished safely.**

Recommended number of day pupils: 69 in the present temporary premises and then 161 in the permanent premises

Recommended age range: 4 to 11 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed.