

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

School name	Didsbury High School
DfE registration number	4009
Unique reference number (URN)	143729
Inspection number	10103161
Inspection dates	20/05/2019 to 20/05/2019
Reporting inspector	David Selby



Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

In carrying out this type of inspection, inspectors assess the extent to which the school is likely to meet 'The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014' when it opens.²

The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, designated safeguarding lead and a member of staff with responsibility for maintaining the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. He spoke with the chief executive officer of the Laurus Trust. He reviewed the plans of the new school building. He scrutinised other documents and information about the school.

The inspector toured the new school's site accompanied by the headteacher, a consultant engaged by the Department for Education (DfE) and the contractor's site manager.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	1350
Age range	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	No specialist provision

Context of the school

The new provision is a secondary school with a sixth form in the Laurus Trust. It will be housed in a new school building currently nearing the end of its construction on a brown-field site in Didsbury.

The school is planned to open in September 2019. It will initially have 210 pupils in Year 7, unless this number is increased following admission appeals. Further year groups will join the school to form Year 7 in subsequent years, until the school has pupils up to Year 11. Leaders plan for the sixth form to open at the start of the school's third year of operation.

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

² www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made. Part 1 to Schedule 1 is not reported against because it does not apply to academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs.

The Laurus Trust is already delivering successful secondary education in its hub school, Cheadle Hulme High School. The trust has also successfully opened two new secondary schools in September 2018.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens.
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Recommended number of day pupils	1350
Recommended age range	11–18
Recommended gender of pupils	Mixed
Recommended type of special educational needs	No specialist provision

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. As well as focusing on academic aspiration, the curriculum will include broad themes concerning competition and physical endeavour, leadership and service, and culture, creativity and rhetoric. These broad aspects provide a strong framework for developing pupils' awareness of values such as tolerance and respect, and of social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects. The senior leader who will be leading on such aspects has appropriate knowledge and experience.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. The school's policies and procedures relating to these aspects are based on those already used successfully in other schools in the Laurus Trust. The new buildings have been built to meet all current safety requirements. The senior leader responsible for safeguarding already has significant experience in ensuring that safeguarding in a school is thorough and systematic. The school's safeguarding policy requires minor amendment for it to reflect fully the latest DfE guidance about safeguarding. Leaders intend to further refine the policy to set out detailed arrangements for using an electronic system to record information about any incidents concerning pupils' welfare.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. The single central record is already in place. The required details are recorded for members of staff who already work in schools within the Laurus Trust. The necessary checks are in process for other members of staff. The systems for checking the suitability of staff and governors are complete and thorough. The school does not intend to use supply teachers, at least in the early stages of its operation.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. The new building is scheduled to be handed over to the school on 5 August 2019. The building contractors, DfE consultant and school leaders are confident that this deadline will be met. The buildings are planned to meet all current building regulations. Matters such as lighting, acoustic conditions and the suitability of toilet and medical facilities have all been properly considered. There is a contractual arrangement for the building contractors to repair any defects in the first year of operation. The Laurus Trust will provide maintenance through its, already established, estates department. The outside areas of the school site will provide ample space for the relatively smaller

numbers of pupils in the school's first few years. However, the available space appears limited for a full school of 1350 pupils.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. School policies and procedures are based on those already in place elsewhere in the Laurus Trust. These have been amended, where necessary, to match the particular circumstances of this school. The required policies are available for parents and others on the school's website.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. The complaints policy is detailed. It sets out informal and formal stages to allow the school to respond to complaints. The policy requires minor amendment in order for it to fully meet the independent school standards (ISS).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. Leaders are preparing for the opening of the school in a systematic way. They are building on the successful work of other schools in the Laurus Trust in setting out policy and determining what practice will be. The arrangements to be made to ensure that pupils' welfare, health and safety are secure have been carefully considered. Leaders have the knowledge and skills they need to ensure that the relevant ISS will be consistently met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. The building has been designed to be fully accessible for people with disabilities. The equality policy sets out how the school will ensure that adjustments will be made so that learning is made accessible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's policies pay proper regard to people with different protected characteristics.

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