

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

School name	Pathways School
DfE registration number	301/7008
Unique reference number (URN)	147189
Inspection number	10103201
Inspection dates	11 July 2019
Reporting inspector	Sarah Murphy-Dutton, HMI



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(1) 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 met with senior leaders, including the headteacher designate, to discuss how they aim to make sure that the independent school standards are met. Policies related to safeguarding, complaints and pupils' well-being and behaviour were reviewed. The inspector toured the premises and considered documentation regarding how leaders intend to ensure that the premises are safe and well maintained.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	90
Age range	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)

Context of the school

The new provision is an all-through special school within the Eko Trust. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan linked to typically complex social, emotional and mental health needs. Initially, the school will admit up to 45 pupils. The school plans to admit a further 15 pupils each year until it reaches its full capacity of 90 pupils.

Until September 2021, the school will use purpose-built premises located at Thames Road, IG11 0HX in the local authority of Barking and Dagenham. Historically, these premises have been used by other new schools in the local area while they have waited for their permanent sites to be ready. Pathways School will use the Thames Road site on a similar basis. The trust has secured a location for the school's permanent site within Barking and Dagenham.

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

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

Originally, the school was due to open in September 2018 as part of another multi-academy trust. This trust was unable to open the school as planned. Instead, pupils who were due to join in September 2018 attended an annex run by another secondary school with experience in special school education. This annex operates on the premises that will be used by Pathways School. All pupils attending the annex will join Pathways School in September 2019.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards when it opens.
------------------------	---

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

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

The requirements in this part are likely to be met. Centred on the school's motto of 'learn, grow and thrive', leaders have developed suitable policies to support pupils' development as confident and independent young people. Behaviour policies emphasise the importance of pupils taking responsibility for their actions. Leaders and other staff aim to ensure that pupils reflect on how their choices may affect others. To complement this, pupils will benefit from personalised programmes to promote their well-being and self-esteem, including appropriate therapeutic provision. Leaders plan to work closely with families and external professionals to obtain a full picture of pupils' individual needs and ensure that these are catered for effectively.

The curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is comprehensive. It features carefully planned opportunities for pupils to learn about important topics such as positive relationships, staying safe and mental health. Opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures, as well as British values, have also been carefully planned for. Links will be made with the local community to enhance pupils' understanding. Pupils will take on roles of responsibility in school, such as helping with the ongoing maintenance of the site. In addition, leaders intend that pupils will vote for school ambassadors who will be involved in decisions about school life. Such opportunities are likely to enable pupils to understand how they can make a positive contribution to the community. Pupils will access a diverse range of extra-curricular activities, for example clubs for dodgeball and origami. In deciding which clubs to offer, leaders have considered pupils' interests, as well as how activities will support pupils' physical and emotional well-being. For instance, in sports clubs, leaders plan for pupils to learn about how to deal with setbacks in a confident and sensible manner.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the relevant regulations in this part. Leaders intend to conduct thorough and regular checks on the premises. Together with detailed risk assessments, leaders will use these checks to make sure that any potential hazards are identified and rectified promptly. This is likely to mean that the premises provide pupils with a safe and suitable learning environment.

Leaders have put in place appropriate emergency evacuation protocols. They plan to keep these protocols under constant review and thereby ensure that they remain fit for purpose, particularly as the number of pupils on roll increases. Suitable guidance is in place to ensure that adults supervise pupils effectively. This includes consideration for the times of the school day and areas of the site which may require higher-than-typical levels of supervision.

The safeguarding policy incorporates the most recent statutory guidance and will be made available to parents and carers via the website. In devising policies and procedures, leaders have given careful thought to the factors that may increase pupils' vulnerability to harm or abuse. This includes consideration of risks that may be prevalent in the local area as well as how pupils' additional needs may reduce their understanding of risk. In this regard, the PHSE curriculum will give suitable weight to helping pupils learn how to stay safe, as well as what they can do if they feel worried or unsafe, including online and outside of school. Staff will receive regular training to make sure that they are vigilant and report any pastoral or safeguarding concerns promptly. Leaders plan to use regular safeguarding and health and safety audits, both from the trust and from external professionals, to evaluate the effectiveness of their work and strengthen arrangements where necessary.

Leaders will provide staff with appropriate training and guidance so that they have the necessary expertise to promote high standards of behaviour. This includes relevant training on how to de-escalate incidents of poor behaviour so that situations do not reach crisis point. Documentation seen indicates that leaders will monitor pupils' well-being and behaviour carefully and take appropriate steps to minimise the likelihood of poor behaviour, including bullying, reoccurring.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the relevant standards in this part. The single central record contains all the required information on the pre-employment checks that leaders must carry out. This includes details on whether adults are subject to any prohibition orders or section 128 directions. Procedures for the safer recruitment of staff meet the latest statutory guidance in all respects. Leaders have suitable procedures in place to verify that supply staff will also undergo all the necessary pre-employment checks.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to comply with all the relevant requirements in this part. The purpose-built premises are well maintained. Teaching spaces are bright, spacious and well ventilated. In addition to a large indoor sports hall, specialist classrooms are available for the teaching of subjects such as art and technology. Outside, pupils will benefit from plenty of space to socialise as well as areas allocated for the teaching of physical education. There is also dedicated space for pupils to apply their learning in subjects such as science, for instance, through growing plants. Leaders have credible plans to make changes to the site so that it caters specifically for pupils' additional needs, such as fitting suitable door handles. All requirements are met in relation to pupils' toilet facilities, showers and changing rooms. A suitable space is available for pupils' medical and first-aid needs. Pupils with medical conditions will have personalised care plans so that staff have the information they need to make sure that these pupils are well cared for.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all of the relevant requirements in this part. Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the information that must be provided to parents. The school's website is currently under construction, following a similar format to that used by other schools in the trust. Leaders will publish the required policies on the website, such as the safeguarding policy and complaints procedure. Leaders also intend to update the website regularly to ensure that families are kept well informed about school events and pupils' achievements. Paper copies of documentation, including policies, will be available on request from the school office. Leaders have also devised appropriate systems for ensuring that parents receive clear information on their children's academic outcomes, as well as their behaviour and attitudes. This includes an annual written report.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations in this part. The complaints policy provides clear guidance for parents on what they can do if they are not satisfied with an aspect of the school's work. This includes the provision for a concern to be raised informally as well as suitable formal stages. Appropriate protocols are in place for maintaining records of complaints, including the outcome and any action taken by the school in response. Leaders intend to make sure that the complaints policy is published on the school's website and paper copies will be available on request.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to comply with the requirements of this part. Leaders have a strong understanding of all aspects of the independent school standards. Their preparation for opening the school has been meticulous. Policies and procedures draw astutely on existing effective practice within the trust as well as leaders' in-depth knowledge of pupils' individual barriers to learning. Leaders' commitment to pupils' well-being and safety is tangible. Crucially, leaders recognise the importance of keeping policies and procedures under continual review to make sure that they work well in practice. Leaders' considerable experience in providing education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), together with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for leaders and other staff, is likely to make sure that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

It is likely that the school will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have clear plans in place to ensure that all pupils, including those with disabilities, can participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum. This includes suitable steps to remove or eliminate any barriers to pupils accessing the site.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019