

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

School name	Aspire School
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	886/7005
Unique reference number (URN)	147833
Inspection number	10148398
Inspection dates	27/04/2020 to 04/05/2020
Reporting inspector	Stephanie Innes-Taylor HMI



Information about the inspection

This inspection was carried out 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 inspection was carried out during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As a result, we could not visit the school site or meet with the proposer in person. The inspector held telephone discussions with the executive headteacher, headteacher and the vice-chair of the board of trustees. The inspector viewed a virtual tour of the permanent school site, reviewed the architects' plans for the permanent site, scrutinised information available on the school's website and reviewed a range of policies and procedures. Using the available information, the inspector is able to give sufficient assurance that the school is likely to meet the independent school standards and, where necessary, what further action is needed.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	168
Age range	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Autistic spectrum disorder; speech, language and communication needs

Context of the school

The new provision will be a special school. It is part of the Grove Park Academies Trust. The school is located a short distance from the only other school in the trust, Grove Park Primary. The two schools intend to work closely together to share expertise and good practice.

The school is still in the process of construction with completion anticipated in July 2020. The school will open in September 2020. Initially, this will be with 18 pupils of compulsory school age.

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.

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, provided that it addresses the regulations noted in the tables set out in parts 3 and 5.
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Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

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

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in relation to this part. The school's values and aims thread throughout the school's policies. Leaders can articulate a clear ambition for pupils to be curious about the world around them. Appropriate plans are in place to provide pupils with a range of opportunities to build their knowledge and skills in areas such as understanding diversity, mutual respect and tolerance for others.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations, provided plans for the site are implemented fully. Policies are in place that evidence that pupils will be kept safe. Leaders have ensured that policies are in line with up-to-date statutory guidance. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies are detailed and include relevant strategies for addressing any problems. The school has an appropriate child protection and safeguarding policy. However, because the site is unfinished, the inspector is only able to provide limited assurance about the implementation of health and safety policies. Leaders understand that there is considerable work to do to ensure that the school is ready to admit pupils. For example, leaders were not able to demonstrate full compliance with the Fire Safety Order 2005.

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

comply with relevant health and safety laws by implementing the health and safety policy effectively	paragraph 11
ensure that, when building work is complete, the school is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.	paragraph 12

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations. The planned single central register is appropriate. It considers the necessary checks that need to be made, by whom and when. Leaders intend to use the system to record checks made for staff, trustees, volunteers and supply staff.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations. Leaders' plans, policies and procedures are robust. However, the inspector is only able to provide limited assurance about some aspects of the premises. At the time of the inspection, it was not possible to ascertain if there was a sufficient supply of hot and cold water and external lighting had not been installed. The architect's plans demonstrate that

requirements for this part are likely to be met if leaders implement them as intended. The virtual tour showed that there is provision for a medical room, sufficient outside space, appropriate internal lighting, and toilet and hygiene facilities. Provision for drinking water was seen but it is not labelled as such. Evidence relating to the premises shows good-quality provision is planned, which will be accessible for all pupils who will attend the school.

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

ensure that the building is maintained to a standard so that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured	paragraph 25
provide external lighting to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises	paragraph 27(b)
provide washing facilities with an adequate supply of hot and cold water	paragraph 28(1)(b)
ensure that water suitable for drinking is clearly labelled as such	paragraph 28(1)(c)
ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.	paragraph 28(1)(d)

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations. All the necessary policies are available to parents and are clearly signposted through the trust's website. The school's website is in place but is in development. It is in the course of being populated with the most up-to-date version of the policies and information.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations. The complaints policy is also the trust's policy. It is suitable for the context of the school. It contains details of the procedures and timelines for the handling of any complaints. The policy will be published on the school's website and is also available through the trust's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations for this part. The executive headteacher is an experienced leader. The headteacher has relevant experience of working in specialist provision. Trustees have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide strong support and challenge to the school. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the regulatory requirements and have fulfilled them successfully. They have ensured that policies and procedures provide strong guidance for the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff. Leaders are clear that they will

continue to monitor all aspects of the school so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations. Suitable plans are in place to ensure that the school is accessible to all pupils and staff, when complete. The policy for equalities clearly identifies different groups and the protected characteristics. It states how staff will support pupils and how leaders will monitor the impact. Leaders can articulate their vision for an inclusive school that will support pupils' individual needs.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

All the statutory requirements for the early years are likely to be met. Staff will be appointed who are suitably qualified and experienced. Existing good practice will be shared across the trust for the development of high-quality provision. School policies and procedures consider the needs of early years children and connect well with the early years policy. They meet current requirements.

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