

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

School name	The Axis Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	895/7002
Unique reference number (URN)	147854
Inspection number	10154455
Inspection dates	09/07/2020 to 14/07/2020
Reporting inspector	Michele Costello 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. During the inspection, video meetings were held with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the headteacher, the pastoral leader and the chair of trustees. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including policies and procedures, information available on the school's website and the plans that were available for the new school building. Using the information provided, the inspector can give enough assurance that the school is likely to meet the independent school standards. However, the advice notes make it clear where further action is required to meet the regulations. The degree of assurance is limited for the premises standards in part 5, and paragraphs 11, 12 and 16 in part 3. The standards for which assurance is limited are indicated in the relevant section for that part.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	48 (24 initially, in Years 6, 7, 8, 9)
Age range	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Social, emotional and mental health

Context of the school

The Axis Academy will be part of the Youth Engagement Schools Trust. The proposed school will be an all-through school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All places will be allocated by the local authority. The

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.

school will be named in a pupil’s education and health care plan. The vision of leaders is to provide ‘a lifeline to children who suffer from emotional and mental health difficulties’.

In September 2020, the proposed school will open for 24 pupils. In the first year of opening, there will only be pupils in Years 6, 7, 8 and 9. There will be a phased placement of pupils with full capacity in three years. The proposed school will be registered for pupils in Reception. However, leaders do not intend to have Reception pupils on roll for at least the first three years.

The new school building is not complete. In September 2020, pupils will be based in a former local authority pupil referral unit building. Pupils will re-locate to the new school building in January 2021.

The headteacher has been appointed from within the trust. Most teaching appointments have been made. A school counsellor has also been appointed. Leaders are still to appoint a number of staff, including a site manager, administrative staff, cleaning and catering staff, and associate staff.

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 it address the regulations noted in the tables as set out in parts 3, 4 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 headteacher has plans in place to ensure that British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are woven throughout the curriculum. There will be opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures. This will include visits to places of worship. The headteacher intends to ensure that pupils have links with the local community. Pupils will learn about how the public institutions in England operate. There is a visiting speakers policy in place to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on visitors.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet the regulations in relation to this part, provided it addresses the regulations set out below. However, the inspector can only provide limited assurance in relation to paragraphs 11, 12 and 16, as it was not possible to visit the site. The inspector carried out a virtual tour of the temporary building and the new building. At the time of the inspection, the new building was not complete.

The proposed school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place. This policy is already available on the school's website. Leaders are aware that this will need to be updated in September 2020 to ensure that the policy is in line with the updated version of 'Keeping children safe in education'.

There will initially be a small number of pupils attending full time. Other pupils who will be on the school's roll have not been in education for a number of years. A pastoral support plan will be established in liaison with medical professionals for these pupils to return to school full time. Once each pupil's individual needs are assessed, a time limit will be agreed by which the pupil is expected to attend full time. Staff will carry out regular home visits for these pupils as part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Fire risk assessments need to be carried out for both buildings. There is a fire strategy in place for the new building, as noted on the building plans. Four staff will complete fire marshal training in August 2020. Leaders have systems in place for identifying risks and carrying out risk assessments. The school did not have a risk assessment policy. This was addressed during the inspection.

Leaders have written a medical needs policy. This makes clear the procedures that staff must follow, including ensuring that written parental permission is given for the administration of prescription medication and paracetamol. Any pupil with a medical need will have an individual health care plan. There are systems in place to log the medication given and to contact parents by phone, and through the school's

management information system, whenever medication is given to pupils. The designated safeguarding leader (DSL) and the headteacher have completed training in the administration of medication.

Pupils will use off-site sports provision while they are based in the temporary building. This will be at Crewe Lifestyle Centre. At the time of the inspection, the lifestyle centre was closed due to COVID-19. As a result, it was not possible for the inspector to assess the suitability of the sports facilities and changing room accommodation. Leaders understand that a risk assessment will need to be put in place for the use of these off-site facilities.

The proposed school has a written behaviour policy in place. This is also available on the school’s website. This policy includes details of the school’s sanctions and rewards. The school will use the trust’s systems for recording behaviour and bullying incidents. Leaders will monitor behaviour trends and patterns during weekly senior leadership team meetings. Leaders intend to use exclusions as a last resort. There is an exclusions policy in place. This is also available on the school’s website.

The proposed school has an anti-bullying policy. Leaders could articulate how they will educate pupils about bullying being unacceptable. Procedures are in place for logging incidents, such as racist incidents.

Templates were provided for the attendance and admissions registers. The school will use a management information system to record attendance and pupil admissions.

The school has one trained first aider. The intention is to train more staff in first aid once the school opens. The DSL and the school’s primary teacher will be trained in paediatric first aid. A first-aid policy and health and safety policy is in place. The proposed school will use the trust’s systems to alert leaders when health and safety checks need to be carried out.

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

ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 for all premises to be used	paragraph 12
ensure that a risk assessment is in place for the use of shared off-site sports facilities and changing rooms.	paragraph 16(b)

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet the regulations in relation to this part, provided it addressed the regulations set out below. There is a single central register (SCR) in place. The school will follow the trust’s recruitment policy. This policy was updated during the inspection to include all the checks that the school carries out on staff before appointment. Checks are still underway for some staff. There are two

members of the trust’s central team recorded on the SCR. A section 128 check had not been carried out on one of the trust’s central team. This was addressed during the inspection. Trustees are already included on the school’s SCR. Two governors are in the process of being appointed. Leaders know that they will need to be added to the SCR. There are still a number of staff to be appointed. Leaders assured the inspector that all staff will be added to the SCR once appointed. Leaders were not aware of the checks to ensure that staff are not disqualified under the Childcare Act 2006. Leaders looked into this during the inspection. They now have a procedure in place to ensure that these checks are carried out on the relevant staff.

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

ensure that disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 checks are carried out on senior leaders and any other relevant staff.	paragraph 18(2)(b)
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Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet the regulations in relation to this part, provided it addresses the regulation set out below. The inspector is only able to provide limited assurance for some aspects of the premises standards, such as the temperature of the water, acoustics and lighting. This is because the inspector was not able to visit the buildings. However, a virtual tour was carried out of the temporary building and the new building.

There are accessible toilets in both the temporary building and the new building. There are separate staff toilets. The two toilets for boys and girls in the temporary building are both within one room, rather than in a room that can be secured from the inside and used by one pupil at a time. This was discussed with the CEO during the inspection. The CEO intends to address this.

Plans for the new school building show that showers will be included in each of the male and female changing rooms. The inspector could not assess the suitability of the changing rooms, or sports facilities, at the off-site provision that the school intends to use for the autumn term, as it was closed at the time of the inspection.

Plans for the new building show that there will be a sensory room, a therapy room, a calm room and a soft play room. There will also be a base for professionals to hold appointments with pupils on the school site.

The CEO informed the inspector that the DfE has agreed to the downgrading of the acoustics in the hub area in the new building due to the limited wall space.

There is a medical room with a sink in both the temporary building and the new building. Both medical rooms are near a toilet. Leaders understand the need to clearly label drinking water and ensure that drinking water facilities are separate from the toilet facilities.

There is outside space in both buildings. There is a large outside area adjacent to the new building. This will include hard and soft surfaces and a specific area for forest school activities.

The temporary building has CCTV. This is registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office. The CCTV will be under the control of the proposed school. There will also be CCTV in the new building. Leaders understand the need to register the CCTV in the new building. The CEO confirmed that there is no CCTV in classrooms or private areas, such as toilets.

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

<p>ensure that either separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over are provided in the temporary building or the toilet facilities are provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and is intended for use by one pupil at a time.</p>	<p>paragraph 23(1)(b)</p>
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Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school has a website. Leaders made a few updates to the website during the inspection. The school is likely to meet all the requirements in part 6.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements in this part. The proposed school has a complaints policy. This is comprehensive and meets all the requirements in part 7. The policy is published on the school’s website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proposed school is likely to meet the requirements for this part, provided it addresses the regulations set out in the table below.

This is a new trust. There is only one other school in the trust, The Fermain Academy. This school was judged to be outstanding in 2018. The current CEO of the trust was the headteacher at the time. The headteacher of the proposed school was an assistant headteacher at The Fermain Academy.

The Fermain Academy is a free school. Therefore, leaders have previous experience of opening a free school. Leaders understand the independent school standards and the need for them to be met consistently. In the policies reviewed as part of the inspection, there are processes for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the implementation of these policies. This would indicate that the school’s policies are likely to be implemented effectively.

The headteacher is a trained special education needs/and or disabilities coordinator. The CEO has many years of experience of working with pupils with special

educational needs/and or disabilities. The headteacher and the CEO are passionate about improving the life chances of young people. There are pupil welfare and safeguarding procedures within the school's policies. This would indicate that leaders will actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The proposed school will have a governing body. The board of trustees will have the main delegated authority during the first term of opening.

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

ensure that the standards in the preceding parts are likely to be met consistently.	paragraphs 12 16(b) 18(2)(b) 23(1)(b)
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Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposed school is likely to meet the regulations in the schedule. The trust has an appropriate accessibility policy in place. The policy was updated to include an accessibility plan for the temporary building.

Statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage

There are no plans to admit pupils in Reception initially, or in the near future. However, leaders have an early years foundation stage (EYFS) policy in place. Their safeguarding policies and procedures would indicate that the statutory requirements for the EYFS are likely to be met. An intimate care policy is in place. Leaders plan for the DSL and the school's primary teacher to be trained in paediatric first aid at the start of the school year. If the school does admit Reception pupils in the future, leaders intend to appoint an early years teacher.

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