

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

School name	Lotus Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	890/7000
Unique reference number (URN)	147845
Inspection number	10148497
Inspection dates	30/06/2020 to 08/07/2020
Reporting inspector	Cindy Impey



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 carried out a virtual tour at the new building. The building work has not been completed. The inspector reviewed a range of policies and procedures provided by the proposer and scrutinised information available on the school's website. The inspector held telephone discussions with the headteacher. Video conference calls were held with the headteacher, the finance and operations manager, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the trust and the chair of governors. Using the available information, the inspector can give sufficient assurance that the school is likely to meet the independent school standards. However, the degree of assurance is limited for some of the standards. 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 on opening)
Age range	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Social, emotional and mental health

Context of the school

The Lotus School is a new school within the Champion Education multi-academy trust. The school will accommodate students who have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs. The school will cater for 48 pupils, ranging from Year 6 to Year 11. The school will open with 24 pupils in September 2020. The new building is located at Langdale Road, Blackpool.

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.
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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 requirements for this part. Leaders plans to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are demonstrated through a wide range of policies. There is a strong focus on developing positive working relationships with pupils, parents and the wider community. Through comprehensive transition arrangements, leaders are making sure that they have a thorough understanding of each pupils' individual circumstances. Pupils will learn about their local area and the many different cultural aspects that make up the wider community. The school's core values link closely to the teaching of British values. Leaders plans to develop respect, self-esteem and confidence are at the centre of pupils' learning. Policies set out leaders' clear expectations for all stakeholders. Provision in this aspect is likely to be strong if policies are implemented as planned.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations assessed for this part. Policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are likely to comply with relevant guidance. Discussions with leaders demonstrate that all aspects of safeguarding are given a high priority. Staff recruitment processes are thorough. Job roles and responsibilities are well defined to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are well catered for. Leaders' have clear plans to communicate health and safety procedures to all staff. Fire risk assessments and evacuation plans at the new site are yet to be carried out as the building is not yet complete. However, policies show that roles, responsibilities and reporting processes are in place.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations for this part. Leaders' policies and procedures for checking the suitability of all adults at the school are fit for purpose and meet latest guidance. Trustees ensure that all the expected background checks are carried out and recorded effectively.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. The virtual tour, building plans and discussions with school leaders confirm that the accommodation is likely to meet requirements when completed. The building is being built in line with latest building regulations and to a high standard. The building will be equipped with a full range of facilities to support pupils with a range of needs. For example, the school will have two sensory rooms, a hygiene room complete with hoist, a lift and a life-skills room. However, the inspector is only able to provide

limited assurances about some aspects of the premises, such as the temperature of the water and the acoustics, as it was not possible to visit the site.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. Leaders are committed to providing the best support for their pupils by working collaboratively with stakeholders, external agencies and educational partners. Leaders plan to draw on their successful practices in place at other schools. All the required policies are in place and will be available on the school's website. Copies of these policies will be made available on request.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations in this part. The complaints policy is clear and contains all the required steps and timelines for the efficient handling of any complaints. Stakeholders can find the complaints policy on the school's website. Leaders have ensured that copies are available for those without access to the internet if requested.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. Discussions with leaders and their supporting documents demonstrate that leaders have a wealth of knowledge and expertise to lead and manage the proposed school successfully. Governors and trustees have strong links with educational organisations and with the local community. Leaders have planned extensive continuous professional development for themselves and staff. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the regulatory requirements. They have established policies that provide strongly for the health, safety and welfare of pupils in their existing schools. There are clear structures in place for monitoring and evaluating practice at all levels and ensuring that policies are implemented consistently across the school.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. The school's accessibility plan is designed to be inclusive. Leaders have a schedule to ensure that the accessibility of provision is reviewed regularly.

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