

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

School name	Highfields Spencer Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	830/2065
Unique reference number (URN)	147869
Inspection number	10148490
Inspection dates	21/05/2020 to 29/05/2020
Reporting inspector	Tracy Hannon 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 headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), representatives of the trust's central team (including the chief executive officer (CEO)) and the chair of the board of trustees. The inspector viewed a virtual tour of the 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.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	210 pupils (including space in the Nursery year equivalent to 26 full-time places)
Age range	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Not applicable

Context of the school

This new provision is a primary school within the Spencer Academies Multi-Academy Trust. The trust is well established. It currently consists of 19 schools across the primary and secondary age range. As part of the trust, the new school will have access to a range of high-quality leadership and management expertise, including access to the trust's teaching school, research school and mathematics hub. The new

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.

headteacher has the support of two headteachers in the trust who both opened new schools in the last academic year.

Highfields is a presumption project aimed at meeting the needs of a growing population. The school will open with 30 Reception-aged pupils and is likely to admit Nursery-aged children within one month of opening. The school will continue to take a similar number of pupils into Reception each year until it meets its capacity of 210 pupils.

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 regulations in relation to this part. Leaders' plans clearly outline how their 'ASPIRE' curriculum aims to develop self-awareness, pride and respect. This provides firm foundations on which children and pupils can learn about British values. The planned provision and policies are likely to prepare pupils well for living in a diverse society.

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 conversations with trust leaders indicate that appropriate procedures will be in place for behaviour, supervision of pupils, risk assessment, first aid and child protection. Well-established, trust-wide policies have been adapted to suit the new school. Trust leaders will also support school leaders in establishing and maintaining these policies. Plans indicate that the proposed school is likely to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For example, plans reflect the type of fire extinguishers to be installed and their location. Leaders' plans form a sound basis for staff to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations for this part. Leaders' proposed policies and procedures for checking the suitability of all adults at the school are fit for purpose and meet the latest guidance. Central trust staff will ensure that all of the expected background checks are carried out and recorded effectively. Leaders intend to use a checklist during recruitment to ensure that all pre-employment actions are completed. They will also use a system of auditing to make sure no requirements are overlooked during the recruitment process.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the standards in this part. At the time of inspection, the internal construction of the modular school building was incomplete.

The accommodation has been thoughtfully designed with the needs of primary-aged pupils in mind. Plans show that classrooms have adequate lighting, ventilation and acoustic conditions. Early years areas have suitable outdoor spaces adjacent to indoor classrooms. Separate toilets have been provided for younger and older pupils with adjacent washing facilities. The inspector was unable to consider the suitability of water temperature due to the virtual nature of the inspection. However, trust documentation reflects an awareness of suitable water temperatures.

The outdoor space, when complete, will include grassed and hard-surfaced areas for the playing of games as well as the teaching of physical and environmental education. The premises are likely to provide high-quality provision in all requirements.

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. Leaders have adapted trust policies to the needs of the school. The school's website is fully operational and provides parents and carers access to key information about the school, including all the school's policies. Leaders have suitable plans in place for reporting to parents and carers about their children's academic progress.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet the standard in this part. The complaints procedure clearly sets out the steps a complainant should follow, the timescales for each stage and the information a complainant should expect to receive at the conclusion of each stage. It sets out what information will be recorded and how that information will be stored.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. Trust leaders and the headteacher have a track record of securing school improvement. Leaders are clear about how they will monitor provision so that the independent school standards are met consistently. They have the necessary expertise to do this.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements of this part. The premises are designed to be accessible. Leaders' plans clearly outline how their curriculum will achieve their aim of developing self-awareness, pride and respect. Leaders have also planned regular reviews of the school's work to make sure the school consistently meets the expectations of the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

All of the statutory requirements for the early years are likely to be met. Leaders' policies and the trust's support are in place to ensure that the early years provision starts well and continues to meet all requirements. A central trust leader, an 'Academy Angel', is in place to support new staff in setting up the environment and ensuring that the provision meets statutory requirements.

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