

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

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| School name | Castle East School |
| Department for Education (DfE) registration number | 935/7017 |
| Unique reference number (URN) | 148541 |
| Inspection number | 10189050 |
| Inspection dates | 24/06/2021 |
| Reporting inspector | Tessa Holledge |

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](#).

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.¹

The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation related to the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards and spoke to the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and the multi-academy trust chief executive officer. The inspector toured the school site and discussed the final plans for the proposed school.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

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| Number of day pupils | 80, rising to 120 when further building space becomes available |
| Age range | 9 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Type of special educational needs | Autistic spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs |

Context of the school

The East Anglian Schools Trust is intending on opening Castle East as specialist provision. They have worked closely with Suffolk local authority to aim for a rapid turnaround between the bid being agreed and the school opening.

The intention is to open the school in September 2021. The local authority has already allocated places to 22 pupils. However, the school will not open physically until 1 November 2021. Leaders have arranged a programme consisting of a mix of remote learning, transition activities and educational visits built around developing teamwork and social skills for September and October.

For the first three years of opening, the school will share a site with a pupil referral unit. There will be no shared areas or access from one setting to the other. The local

¹ Part 1 to Schedule 1 is not reported against because it does not apply to academies, free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges.

authority intends to transfer the space currently occupied by the pupil referral unit to the school in 2024.

The school will aim to provide specialist provision for those with autistic spectrum disorder and/or communication and interaction difficulties. The provision will be aimed at those pupils at or above age-appropriate cognitive ability.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

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| Overall outcome | The school is likely to meet all of the relevant independent school standards provided that it addresses the regulations noted in part 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 school is likely to meet all of the requirements. The intended curriculum places pupils' social and emotional development at the centre of their provision. Pupils will start every day focusing on these skills. Opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues are identified clearly in planning. Leaders have planned a programme of assemblies and visits that will give pupils chances to learn about different cultures and experience awe and wonder.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. Child protection policies and procedures are clear. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies have been specifically written to meet the needs of the proposed pupils. Health and safety, fire and first-aid policies are comprehensive.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. All appropriate checks have been made on staff already appointed. Leaders are clear on processes that need to be carried out as they appoint more.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements if appropriate showers and changing facilities are provided for pupils over the age of 11.

The school will occupy a site that was also previously a school. Careful consideration has been made to the refurbishment to ensure that the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are provided for. There are a range of specialist teaching spaces, including science and food technology. Classrooms are light and airy. Primary pupils have separate classrooms and play areas to meet their needs.

The school is surrounded by secure fencing. There is plenty of green space for pupils to play on and hard standing areas for physical education.

Appropriate drinking water supplies are provided. The medical room has a sink and is close to a toilet facility.

The school does not have enough showers or any changing facilities for pupils over the age of 11.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. The school already has a comprehensive website, with most policies ready to share with parents. Leaders have clear plans on how they will use a mix of methods to communicate daily with parents.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. The complaints policy is that of the multi-academy trust. It is detailed and meets all requirements.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. Leaders showed through discussion and documents provided that they have a good understanding of the particular needs of the pupils for the proposed school.

When it has become apparent, for example with the lack of changing facilities, that two standards would not be met, leaders were seen to take proactive action to get this remedied.

The governing body is already active and will bring governance experience to the school.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements. Adaptations for different needs are included in school policies and documents.

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