

Advice note for a pre-registration inspection of an academy/free school/studio school/university technical college (UTC)

School name	Lanchester Community Free School
DfE registration number	Not yet allocated
Unique reference number (URN)	1659
Inspection number	446877
Inspection dates	16 June 2014
Reporting inspector	John Gush

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Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

Context of the school

The Lanchester Community Free School is a primary co-educational free school in Watford. It is located in a building previously used by West-Herts College before new college facilities were built next door. The refurbishment of the building is well under way with the first phase scheduled for completion in September 2014. A delay in the refurbishment schedule, due to a recent discovery of asbestos, means that the handover from the contractors to the trust that will operate the school may not take place until after the beginning of the school term in September 2014. The school has suitable contingency plans, which are described in the section on the school's premises and accommodation below.

The school is operated by the West-Herts Community Free School Trust, which already runs one free school with two others also due to open in September 2014. They are all located in Watford.

The school will ultimately admit 420 boys and girls but it will start with Reception class pupils only. It is planning to open in September 2014 with 60 pupils and places have already been allocated. The executive headteacher has recently been appointed to lead the school and one of the other new free schools in the group. A full complement of staff has yet to be appointed but recruitment is currently underway.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

All regulations are likely to be met by the curriculum planning, although implementation could not be seen. The school has adopted schemes of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship that will provide suitable learning material to enable pupils to learn about English institutions and services and British values. Areas covered will include civil and criminal law as well as the rule of law more widely. These studies will complement the plans the school has to promote the ethos of the trust that operates the school. This includes building pupils' emotional resilience and enabling them to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The clear code of conduct will also help them to distinguish right from wrong.

The school has developed detailed plans to enable pupils to benefit from contributing to their local community. They have developed links with an elderly people's home in close proximity to the school and have well-established plans for a school council that will choose local and national charities to support. In addition, the school has budgeted for a learning mentor who will provide liaison with parents and carers, in particular those for whom English is not a first language.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/99

A wide range of activities are planned to celebrate and help pupils appreciate the many cultural traditions to which they belong. This will include a monthly focus on different languages as well as a celebration of various religious festivals. The school has a wide ethnic mix and will promote a strong multi-faith ethos with the intention of helping pupils to develop attitudes of tolerance and harmony.

There is a stated requirement in the staff handbook, that staff do not present a partisan political view and that any political issues are presented in a balanced manner.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet most, but not all, of the regulations. In a number of instances the school has not completed its preparation and in these areas, detailed below, the regulations are not likely to be met.

The school's policy framework is well planned and in many aspects it identifies procedures that will keep the pupils safe and free from harm. This includes the safeguarding, management of behaviour and anti-bullying policies. However, aspects of some policies are not yet sufficiently developed and plans for implementation are not fully formed. The executive headteacher is the school's designated safeguarding lead and has received the appropriate higher-level training in her previous post. She is booked on to a course to refresh this training. This will take place later in June 2014. Basic child protection training for all staff is planned to take place before the beginning of the new school year and has already been firmly arranged, so that requirements are likely to be met.

The school's behaviour policy sets out a suitable range of procedures to promote good behaviour in the school, including identifying appropriate sanctions and rewards. Plans have been drawn up for the anti-bullying strategy which includes a focus on racial tolerance and how to avoid the dangers of cyber-bullying. However the strategy does not currently provide sufficient focus on wider prejudice-based bullying; the school is aware of this and has plans to extend the strategy before the beginning of the new term.

A first aid policy has been developed but is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that all staff will know how to respond to situations that require first aid. In addition, the staff who will be trained as paediatric first aiders have not yet been identified. Suitable attendance and punctuality records and the admission register will be held electronically on a commercial information management system, as will records of any incidents or sanctions. As part of the design stage of the school's refurbishment contract, a construction phase fire risk assessment was prepared. However, because the building is still being converted, the fire risk and health and safety risk assessments that will take account of the new facilities have not yet been compiled. In addition, the training materials in fire safety and health and safety have not been produced. Because the building is not complete, no evacuation procedures have been produced. Also, there is no fire risk policy identifying the routine checks to be made, such as alarm testing or emergency lighting, and there are no arrangements as yet for fire safety equipment maintenance.

Appropriate plans are in place regarding future educational trips and visits. These include assessments of the risk involved and arrangements to mitigate it. On opening the school will share some facilities with another school in the trust. Suitable plans have been made to ensure the safety of pupils in relation to sharing facilities for the first two terms. The school has yet to draw up risk assessments to ensure the safety and welfare of both groups of pupils. The school has ensured that its new premises are accessible to pupils and staff with a range of differing accessibility needs. It has not, however, developed a plan for increasing access to its curriculum or the information it provides for pupils, parents carers and others. It plans to do so once the school is open.

In order to meet the regulations in full, the college should:

- ensure that the anti-bullying strategy enables pupils to understand prejudice-based bullying and minimises the possibility of it occurring in the school (paragraph 10)
- ensure that the health and safety policy complies with legislative requirements (paragraph 11)
- ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13)
- ensure that sufficient staff are trained in first aid and that the first aid policy provides suitable guidance for staff in the event of a situation arising where first aid is required (paragraph 14)
- produce a three year plan which increases access to the curriculum, information and premises in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

A proportion of the regulations for this standard are not likely to be met because the process of checking the suitability of staff and the proprietorial body to work with children has not yet been completed. Some of the required checks are recorded for many of the staff members who have been appointed to date. The single central register of checks for staff members includes many of the required checks but does not provide an accurate record of the barred list checks or of whether the list of those who are prohibited from teaching has been checked. For members of the proprietorial body a number of required checks are not recorded.

In order to meet the regulations in full, the college should:

- ensure that the required checks are made and recorded for all members of staff (paragraphs 19(2)(a), (b) and (c))
- ensure that the required checks are made and recorded for all members of the proprietorial body (paragraphs 21(6)(a) and (b))

- ensure that the single central register accurately records all the required checks about the suitability of members of staff and of members of the proprietorial body to work with children (paragraphs 22(2), (3), and (6)).

Premises of and accommodation at the school

All of the regulations regarding the premises and accommodation at the school are likely to be met. This judgement has been reached following a visit to the site, scrutiny of the plans and discussion with the contractor regarding the timescale of the contract. Refurbishment of the school's premises is well under way and is suitably managed by a single contractor. Due to remediation works following the discovery of asbestos, the schedule is currently delayed but the contractor expects to make up significant time in the next month. The executive headteacher and proprietor have established two separate contingency plans should the site not be ready for handover in time for the start of the new term. One is for partial handover of the building with a suitably-sized and equipped area completed and separated from any continuing building works. The other is for the joint use of the premises of another school in the vicinity. The executive head teacher is in regular contact with the contractor. As soon as sufficient information is available she will, in collaboration with the proprietor, decide which plan will be appropriate and how it should be put into action.

Suitably-sized classrooms are under construction with an appropriate range of services to enable electronic communications and aids to learning. Specialist food technology facilities are planned, as is a library area. Outdoor areas for physical exercise and play are available with new play equipment being designed. An appropriate range of toilet facilities is being built on each floor and the medical room is planned with washing facilities. It is located close to one of the toilet areas. Suitable arrangements are in place for the provision of labelled drinking water and for ensuring that hot water does not scald users. External lighting is being installed.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all the regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school must meet the regulations identified in the check sheet. This is with regard to those regulations that refer to the provision of a panel should the complainant not be satisfied with the result of a written complaint.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. The school can be registered and allowed to open on receipt by DfE of evidence of improvement in relation to the following matters:**
 - ensure that the anti-bullying strategy enables pupils to understand prejudice-based bullying and minimises the possibility of it occurring in the school (paragraph 10)
 - ensure that the health and safety policy complies with legislative requirements (paragraph 11)
 - ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 13)
 - produce a three-year plan which increases access to the curriculum, information, and premises in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
 - ensure that the required checks are made and recorded for all members of staff (paragraphs 19(2)(a), (b) and (c))
 - ensure that the required checks are made and recorded for all members of the proprietorial body (paragraphs 21(6)(a) and (b))
 - ensure that the single central register accurately records all the required checks about the suitability of members of staff and of members of the proprietorial body to work with children (paragraphs 22(2), (3) and (6))
 - ensure that the complaints procedure refers to the provision of a panel, one member of whom is independent of the school, should the complainant not be satisfied with the result of a written complaint (paragraphs 25(f), (g), (h), (i) and (j)).

If registration is recommended, please state:

Recommended number of day pupils: 420

Recommended number of boarders: 0

Recommended age range: 4 to 11 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/A.