

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

School name	The Wherry School
DfE registration number	926/7002
Unique reference number (URN)	144769
Inspection number	10035727
Inspection date	16/06/2017
Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted 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 inspector met with the principal, vice-principal and chair of governors. He undertook a tour of the school site, which is nearing completion, reviewed the architects' plans, scrutinised information available on the school's website and reviewed a range of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	48
Age range	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Autistic spectrum disorder

Context of the school

A board of trustees known as The Wherry School Trust was established in 2016 to develop a free school because they identified a gap in provision for mainstream pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The Wherry School is proposed to be an all-through day special school for pupils aged four to 19 with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and a wide range of abilities. The school is not affiliated to any religious character. All pupils will be referred and funded by their local authority and will be admitted with an education, health and care plan.

It is anticipated that 48 pupils will be admitted in Year 1 to Year 8 classes in September 2017, after the new building has been completed and the keys to the new premises have been handed over at the end of August 2017. The school intends a phased admission over three years to meet its full complement of 100 pupils, which will include 16 students in the sixth form. There will be six pupils per class who will be taught by a teacher and two support assistants.

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 2014³

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

The school is likely to meet all the requirements in this part. The school's planning for religious education shows that pupils across the school will learn about a variety of world religions, celebrating different religious festivals and will make visits to different places of worship.

The school's policy for personal, social, health and economic education shows an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of fundamental British values. The school's code of conduct and proposed system of rewards and sanctions are likely to develop pupils' self-esteem and their understanding of right from wrong.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part. The safeguarding policy is up to date, referring to the latest guidance for keeping children safe in education. It is supported by a range of other policies which promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including an e-safety policy. A well-conceived behaviour policy sets out a range of sanctions to be adopted in the event of unacceptable behaviour, which range from reprimand and time out to fixed-term exclusions. The anti-bullying policy clearly defines the role and responsibilities of staff in preventing and dealing with all forms of bullying or prejudiced-based behaviour.

There is a clear risk assessment policy supported by thorough procedures for assessing all potential risks when pupils are in school or on educational visits. The school is currently undergoing a detailed fire risk assessment, with checks made on all electrical appliances. A useful policy on first aid, which meets requirements, has also been developed. Electronic attendance and admissions registers are in place.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all the requirements. The single central record currently records the checks made on all staff and trustees. The school does not plan to use supply teachers from an agency. All required checks have been made prior to staff appointments and the procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough. These include barring, identity and right-to-work checks.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283/contents/made. Part 1 to Schedule 1 is not reported against because it does not apply to academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all the standards in this part. The school will occupy new single-storey premises and accommodation on a spacious site near Norwich city centre. There are sufficient well-lit, well-heated and well-ventilated classrooms in each of the separate primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and sixth-form departments. These include a range of practical areas and break-out rooms, plus office and storage space.

Plans show that the buildings, which are well advanced in construction, will offer high-quality provision in all areas. These include medical facilities, restrooms, changing facilities and shower rooms. There are sufficient toilets of appropriate size for the different age ranges for boys and girls, and separate toilets for staff, all of which meet requirements. Pupils will benefit from three separate spacious outdoor recreational areas so that they can play outside and they will have the use of the local sports stadium and leisure facilities for physical education.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all the requirements. The required policies, including the safeguarding policy, are in place and made available to parents. The website is informative and useful for parents. It contains contact names and addresses in the school and it is being updated with the most recent policies and information. The school intends to provide copies of all policies to parents, on request.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all the requirements in this part. The school has developed a clearly written and detailed complaints policy. This contains all the essential timelines for the informal stage, the formal written stage and the panel hearing stage of a complaint. It provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and for parents to be accompanied by a friend if they wish. The complaints procedure is available to parents on request and is included on the school's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all the requirements in this part. Inspection findings show that leaders are ensuring that all of the regulations are likely to be met. Staff have been appointed with the requisite skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. A clear policy is in place to identify the support provided to different groups and the school is in the process of finalising its accessibility plan as soon as the building is completed. The new single-storey building provides ramps, wide doors and corridors for wheelchair users, and disabled toilet facilities.

Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage

The school is likely to meet all of the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage, although there are no planned admissions of children in this phase until September 2018. Suitably qualified and experienced staff are due to be appointed and policies meet the current learning and welfare requirements for the early years.

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