

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

School name	Snowfields Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	886/7006
Unique reference number (URN)	147870
Inspection number	10148516
Inspection dates	10/06/2020 to 16/06/2020
Reporting inspector	Stephanie Innes-Taylor 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 principal and assistant principal, the chief operating officer of the trust and the chair of the governing board. The inspector viewed a virtual tour of the permanent 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	140 (initially 48 in September 2020)
Age range	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Autistic spectrum disorder

Context of the school

The new provision is a special school within the Leigh Academies Trust. The school shares a site with a proposed new primary school provision, Bearsted Primary Academy. The schools intend to work closely together and with other schools within the trust to share expertise, resources and good practice.

The school is proposed to open in September 2020. Initially, this will be with 48 Year 7 and Year 8 pupils.

Due to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the building of the school has been delayed and is incomplete. However, building work has now

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.

resumed. Leaders are hoping that the site will be ready to admit pupils from September 2020, as planned. Appropriate plans are in place for pupils to use another school within the trust on a temporary basis, if there are further delays.

The principal and leaders of the Leigh Academies Trust have designed the new provision to be inclusive, and plans show careful consideration of the needs of the pupils who will attend the school. The school offers high-quality provision, such as a trampoline room, sensory rooms and hygiene room. Pupils will be able to develop essential life and communication skills through the provision of kitchenettes and a community café. The school will benefit from thoughtfully designed external sports, play and learning facilities.

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, provided that it addresses the regulations noted in the tables set out in parts 3 and 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 proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in this part. Leaders have a planned programme of learning to enable pupils to build their knowledge and understanding of the wider world in a way that will meet individual needs well. Leaders' ambition for the provision to be a school where 'nurture meets aspiration' is exemplified in the school's policies and procedures. The plans for provision will provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of British values, diversity, and social and cultural traditions.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations in this part. Essential policies are in place. They provide satisfactory evidence that the school is likely to comply with guidance. The detail within these documents indicates that health, safety, first aid and assessments of risk, supervision and behaviour are well prepared and of high priority for leaders of the school. Procedures are explained clearly. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy which is up to date with the latest statutory guidance, including with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies detail appropriate strategies for addressing any issues. However, the inspector is only able to provide limited assurance about the implementation of health and safety policies because the site is unfinished.

Leaders appreciate that there is significant work to do to ensure that the school is ready to admit pupils. For example, leaders were not able to demonstrate full compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Additionally, the building does not yet have lighting, toilets or washing facilities installed.

In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should:

comply with relevant health and safety laws by implementing the health and safety policy effectively	paragraph 11
ensure that, when building work is complete, the school is compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.	paragraph 12

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in this part. A single central register is in place. This details the required checks that have been made, by whom and when. Checks are recorded on the system for all relevant staff and trustees.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the relevant regulations in this part. Leaders' plans and procedures are comprehensive. Nevertheless, the inspector is only able to provide limited assurance about some aspects of the premises. The virtual tour showed that there are no toilet, washing or drinking-water facilities installed currently. Internal and external lighting have yet to be fitted. The architect's plans demonstrate that requirements for this part are likely to be met if leaders implement them as intended. For example, there is provision for drinking water fountains, ample outside space, appropriate lighting, and toilet and hygiene facilities. Evidence relating to the premises shows good-quality provision is planned which is fully accessible for all pupils who will attend the school.

In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should:

ensure that the building is maintained to a standard so that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured	paragraph 25
ensure that the lighting in each room or other internal space is suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities that normally take place in there	paragraph 27(a)
provide external lighting to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises	paragraph 27(b)
provide suitable drinking water facilities	paragraph 28(1)(a)
provide toilets and urinals with an adequate supply of cold water	paragraph 28(1)(b)
provide washing facilities with an adequate supply of hot and cold water	paragraph 28(1)(b)
ensure that water suitable for drinking is clearly labelled as such	paragraph 28(1)(c)
ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users.	paragraph 28(1)(d)

Part 6. Provision of information

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in this part. A website for the school is in place with relevant links to the trust's website. It is up to date and compliant with guidance for what academies should publish on their website. All mandatory policies are in place and are available to parents, including the safeguarding policy.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in this part. The complaints policy is suitable to the context of the school. It contains information that clearly sets out the procedure to be followed and the timescales involved. The policy is published on the school's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The proposed school is likely to meet all the regulations in this part. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the inclusive provision they want this school to provide for pupils. The principal is an experienced leader and headteacher. She possesses extensive knowledge and expertise in the field of special educational needs provision. Leaders of the trust have ensured that senior leaders, members of the governing board and trustees have relevant knowledge and skills to provide strong leadership and management to the school. They demonstrate a good understanding of the regulatory requirements and their roles and responsibilities. Leaders have provided policies which give appropriate guidance for the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The proposed school is likely to meet the regulations in this schedule. The school is designed to be inclusive. Features such as ramps, adjustable work surfaces, a hearing loop system and a lift make facilities accessible for disabled pupils and staff. The policies for equal opportunities identify protected characteristics. They outline expectations for staff in two separate policies: one for staff and one for pupils. It is clear how pupils will be supported.

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