

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

School name	Watling Academy
Department for Education (DfE) registration number	258/2548
Unique reference number (URN)	147860
Inspection number	10148528
Inspection dates	27/04/2020 to 01/05/2020
Reporting inspector	Karine Hendley (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. For this reason, the inspector did not make an assessment of the premises and accommodation set out in part 5 of the independent school standards. The inspector held telephone discussions with the executive headteacher (who is also the chief executive officer (CEO)), the head of school, the deputy headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), representatives of the trust's central team, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the governing body. Using the available information, the inspector is able to give sufficient assurance that the school is likely to meet the independent school standards that were assessed.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	1,800
Age range	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Not applicable

Context of the school

This new provision is a secondary school within the Denbigh Alliance Multi-Academy Trust. It is a presumption school aimed at meeting the needs of a growing population. Milton Keynes local authority is in the process of constructing the building and site, which is estimated to be ready for occupation in the spring term of 2021.

The school will open in September 2020, when 180 Year 7 pupils will be admitted. It will initially be located in temporary accommodation on the first floor of Fairfields Primary School. Work to adapt the rooms in the temporary accommodation is underway. Pupils will move to the new site when construction is completed. In

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.

September 2021, a further 300 Year 7 pupils are intended to join. From September 2022, Year 7 cohorts of 360 are planned. The final capacity of the school will be 1,800.

The Denbigh Alliance Multi-Academy Trust is successful in delivering a good quality of education at its existing secondary school. As a part of the trust, the new secondary will have access to the expertise of staff and leaders. It will also benefit from access to the trust's teaching school, mathematics hub, science learning partnership and computing hub.

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 school is likely to meet all the regulations for this part. The school's values of respect, responsibility and kindness underpin the school's policies. Leaders have prioritised planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development appropriately. Leaders have identified a wealth of varied opportunities to promote pupils' SMSC development and their understanding of fundamental British values. These include lessons (for example, through history and religious education curriculum plans) assemblies, well-being sessions, the formation of pupil action groups, themed days and extra-curricular clubs. Leaders have also planned for pupils to have the opportunity to contribute to their local community and to charities. Leaders' plans include wide-ranging opportunities aimed at empowering pupils and enabling them to contribute to the school, for example through action groups and house councils. Some of the school's work has already started. Leaders used their pupil open evening and home-schooling transition work to trigger pupils' ideas about how they can contribute to the school. Provision in this aspect is likely to be strong if policies are implemented as planned.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Not all standards were assessed for this part. The inspector is unable to assess whether the school is likely to meet paragraph 11 or paragraph 12. This is because the inspector was unable to visit the school site and it was not possible to carry out a virtual tour or other means of examining the site remotely.

Policies are already in place and show a suitable level of detail. These and other evidence indicate that appropriate procedures for behaviour, supervision, risk assessment, first aid and safeguarding will be in place and in line with appropriate guidance. Leaders' plans for training staff and maintaining high expectations for their conduct are in place. Leaders have appointed a healthcare professional to lead on first aid and have introduced a sophisticated system for recording and analysing incidents involving first aid and accidents. Designated safeguarding leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. They are clear about the local safeguarding risks and have plans in place to address these. Anti-bullying policies outline a suitably thorough, multi-faceted approach to the prevention of all types of bullying. Leaders' plans for recording and monitoring the effectiveness of their work in relation to this part are comprehensive.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all the regulations for this part. Leaders have a comprehensive recruitment policy in place, which shows their intention to adhere to safer recruitment guidance from the Secretary of State. Similarly, policies for lettings and for the use of supply staff outline procedures to ensure that safer recruitment

practices are followed. The single central register is in place and shows appropriate pre-employment checks have been carried out for all staff appointed to date. The single central register shows the required checks to be made, by whom and when, and these checks will be recorded on the system for new appointments, including for trustees and members of the local governing body. Staff managing recruitment and the single central register are experienced and have secure knowledge of the statutory guidance for safer recruitment. Leaders intend to implement thorough audit processes during, and on completion of, each recruitment phase to ensure full adherence to their policies and procedures. They have already used this process of auditing for the employees already recruited.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The inspector is unable to assess whether the school is likely to meet part 5. This is because the inspector was unable to visit the school site and it was not possible to carry out a virtual tour or other means of examining the site remotely.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. All required policies are in place. Some, including the safeguarding policy, behaviour policy and anti-bullying policy, are already available for parents on the website. Leaders have a planned timeline to publish all other documents required for this part.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet the requirements for this part. The complaints policy covers all the necessary components. It follows the appropriate three-stage approach, with timescales given where appropriate. It is suitably detailed and is clearly written. It is published on the school's website.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for this part. The trust already has experience of successfully leading a nearby secondary school. The head of school has a wealth of experience in senior leadership and, along with other senior and trust leaders, has a track record of securing school improvements. Leaders have clear plans in place to support the well-being of pupils, including ensuring that every pupil has at least one member of staff who knows them very well. Well-being provision is intended to be tailored to the needs of individual pupils, in addition to a core offer which will be in place through tutor time and personal, social, health and economic education lessons. Leaders are clear about how they will continue to monitor provision so that the independent school standards are met consistently and they have the necessary skills and knowledge to do this.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for this part. The policy for equalities identifies groups and makes provision for positive action where appropriate. It is

clear about how to support each group and monitor impact. Through the accessibility plan, leaders intend to enable access for all pupils to all trust sites.

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