

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

School name	Grove House School
DfE registration number	999/1882
Unique reference number (URN)	1882
Inspection number	464441
Inspection dates	10 July 2015
Reporting inspector	David Young

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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 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.¹

Context of the school

- Grove House School is to be located in the refurbished premises of a former maintained school in Brentwood, Essex. The school is sponsored by the Grove House School Trust and is due to open on 4 September 2015. The plans provide for new provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. There is a shortage of specialist provision in the locality and the plans are supported by the local authority.
- The school has applied to admit up to 105 boys and girls in the age range 8 to 19 years. In the first year it plans to admit up to 40 pupils in Years 4 to 8. All pupils will have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan related to their speech, language and communication needs.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

Number of day pupils	105
Age range	8 to 19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Type of special educational needs	Speech, language and communication needs

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014²

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

- The school is likely to meet all of the regulations but implementation could not be seen. The school's policies for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, collective worship and British values set out the context in which pupils' personal development will be addressed.

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

² <http://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.

- The ethos of the school is planned to actively encourage pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and confidence. Pupils will be required to set their own personal targets and review their learning objectives, including weekly review. Weekly merits and a celebration assembly will confirm pupils' achievements.
- The school plans to invite visitors from the Risk Avert programme to help pupils understand risk and how to consider the implications. All pupils will also be taught about being safe through the planned e-safety programme. The local bereavement counselling service will provide group work and family support related to mental health and well-being.
- The curriculum includes a comprehensive, personal, social, health and citizenship education programme for all pupils. This covers social and emotional aspects of learning and a specific social skills programme, including self-awareness and understanding emotions.
- Pupils will be encouraged to show initiative and make a contribution to the local and wider communities. An enrichment programme will run throughout school day, including links with the neighbouring secondary school. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme will operate for Year 9 pupils, including a community service element. Pupils will support national charities and take part in the local special schools' sports programme.
- Pupils will be provided with a broad general knowledge of the law and of public institutions and services in England. Plans are in place for local community visitors, including the police and fire services. Pupils will visit the local library and will be introduced to the work of local authors; they will also celebrate World Book Day. A link has been established with a local country park where the staff will provide a contact to lead the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Pupils will attend live performances such as the classical spectacular at the Albert Hall. Plans are in place for a theatre group visit in the autumn term.
- The school plans to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of diverse cultures and traditions. The curriculum includes a multi-faith religious education programme. Events will be celebrated, including European Languages Day and a variety of multicultural festivals. Pupils will contribute to overseas charities, supporting children from diverse backgrounds through the annual Comic Relief event. Art, music and humanities topics include multicultural themes. Plans are in place to visit the local Buddhist centre and Hindu temple.
- Fundamental British values, including democracy will be taught. The local Member of Parliament has agreed to visit the school. Visits are planned to the local council and to the Houses of Parliament. Pupils will take on roles and responsibilities, including monitor roles and electing representatives to the school council.
- The staff code of conduct requires all members of staff to adopt a balanced and non-partisan approach to any controversial religious or political issues. The same requirement will be placed on any visitors contributing to the curriculum.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- Documentary evidence indicates that all the regulations are likely to be met. The school has produced comprehensive policies for behaviour management and exclusions, anti-bullying and first aid.
- Training plans are in place for the induction of all staff before the school opens. These include training in fire safety, safeguarding, positive handling and the use of the school's electronic information management system for the recording of registers, incidents and exclusions. A sufficient number of staff members have up-to-date training in first aid.
- The safeguarding policy is fully compliant and has regard to the latest DfE guidance documents, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, 2015. It is available for download from the school's website. Designated lead persons for safeguarding are trained to the required level and named in the policy. The lead trustee for safeguarding is also named. Contact details are provided for the local authority safeguarding officer and emergency social services.
- Senior staff and representatives of the trustees have been trained in safer recruitment. The recruitment policy covers the completion of all required checks, including a health check and the receipt of suitable references.
- Suitable policies and procedures are in place for all aspects of health and safety, including fire safety and risk assessment. Firm arrangements are in place for completion of a fire risk assessment as soon as building works are completed. A date has also been agreed with the local fire officer to visit to confirm emergency evacuation procedures.
- Admission and attendance registers will be maintained on the school's electronic information management system, together with records of any serious incidents or exclusions.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- The school's planning for safe recruitment, and implementation to date, indicate that all of the regulations are likely to be met. All required checks have been completed for staff and trustees appointed currently. The details are recorded in a suitable single central register. Checks are completed and entered into the register as new staff are appointed.
- The school has not appointed any supply staff through an agency. The recruitment policy includes the required procedures should such staff be appointed in the future.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- The school is likely to meet all of the regulations. The school is to be located in the premises of a former local authority maintained school. The premises are located in two blocks, one of which is undergoing refurbishment for occupation from 1 September 2015. Detailed plans for the premises and accommodation were scrutinised and a site visit completed.
- The building due to be occupied in the first year of the school's operation is on track for completion by the agreed date, together with associated external works. Work has not started on the internal refurbishment of the second block which is due for occupation in September 2016. The Education Funding Agency is managing the preparation and refurbishment work on behalf of the trust. The Department will wish to continue to monitor progress with the premises directly with the agency.
- The first phase of the premises includes sufficient rooms of suitable size to accommodate up to the maximum 40 pupils planned for admission in the first year. Teaching spaces are suitable for the curriculum and therapeutic provision planned for the first year of operation. These include subject specialist rooms in addition to general teaching rooms.
- Furniture suitable for the planned age range is ready to be installed on completion of the refurbishment work. There are sufficient washrooms and a suitable medical room which can also provide for any pupil who may be unwell during the school day. Food will be prepared off-site and served in appropriate facilities within the school.
- There is sufficient outside space for play and recreation. Arrangements have been agreed with the adjacent secondary free school for the safeguarded use of sports facilities which include changing rooms and showers. The external boundaries of the site will be fully fenced. Buildings and access points to the school will be fully secure.

Part 6. Provision of information

- The school is likely to meet all of the regulations for registration. All the required information for parents is provided on the school's website, including contact details for the school and the trustees.
- A number of school policies, including safeguarding and complaints, can be downloaded from the website. All additional required policies are available on request from the school; this is made clear on the website.
- Templates have been designed for regular reporting to parents. The school is aware of its responsibilities to provide local authorities and others with information as required.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. The policy and procedures for handling complaints follow the requirements of the independent school standards.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. Trustees and senior leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards.
- Arrangements for governance have been agreed. These provide for appropriate support to school leaders and for robust accountability. The trustees, in their planned arrangements, have ensured suitable procedures for the monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and to ensure pupils' wellbeing.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has produced the first draft of a three-year plan to increase accessibility. This will be reviewed and revised as each phase of the school commences operation.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

Overall outcome	The school is likely to meet all relevant independent school standards when it opens
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Recommended number of day pupils	105 (40 in the first year)
Recommended age range	8 to 19 years
Recommended gender of pupils	Mixed
Recommended type of special educational needs	Speech, language and communication needs