

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

School name	CUL Academy
DfE registration number	999/1647
Unique reference number (URN)	1647
Inspection number	446864
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Reporting inspector	Michael Best

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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 proprietor, City United Academy Limited, seeks to establish a free school for up to 50 male and female students aged 13 to 16 years in the Aston area of Birmingham. The school will occupy converted business premises near Junction 10 of the M6 motorway to the north of the city centre. Conversion of the premises started on 16 June 2014 and is due to be completed for 1 September 2014. The school plans to open on 3 September 2014 with 30 students, with a full complement from the second year onwards.

The school will provide a range of short- and long-term courses for students from across the city who are excluded or at risk of exclusion from their mainstream secondary schools. Students will attend part- or full-time according to their individual needs. School staff will also provide outreach support for students in their own mainstream schools. In providing for each student's specific needs, the school's priority is to enable them to re-integrate full time into mainstream education as soon as they possibly can.

The school's mission is 'to improve and develop the lives and opportunities of children and young people in Birmingham through a careful and imaginative mix of activities'. Its vision is 'to provide the best chance to disadvantaged children and young people of Birmingham in order for them to compete in this competitive world'.

Compliance with the regulations

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school is likely to meet all the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The proposed provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is appropriate for the age range of the students and reflects the school's aims. The school has adopted a commercial scheme, leading to an externally moderated qualification, to promote students' personal, social and health education and citizenship through the taught

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

curriculum. This is further developed through extra-curricular activities and individual support.

The school's proposed programme focuses on raising students' confidence and self-esteem so as to enable them to succeed in full-time education and training. It provides a secure basis for preparing for their future lives in society and in the workplace. Developing students' self-respect, understanding and tolerance of others underpins the provision. Particular emphasis is placed on helping students to understand and respect differences so as to enjoy healthy relationships regardless of colour or creed. The school's policies and procedures promote high expectations of students' behaviour in and out of school. Students will be supported in valuing themselves as individuals and to shun involvement in gangs, drug dealing and violence. They will develop the skills needed to work hard and succeed through taking part in social, sporting and commercial activities with others. Help in making the right decisions when faced with difficult dilemmas and situations, and to have the confidence to learn from their mistakes, will be promoted both within school and through links with key figures in the business community and agencies within the city and beyond. Students' cultural development will be promoted through specialist art and music provision, visits and visitors. The school's plans include helping students to understand and value their rights and responsibilities within a democratic society, leading healthy and safe lives, and developing a healthy set of values and attitudes within a clear moral code. Students will develop a broad knowledge of the civil law, public institutions and services in England through discrete topics within the citizenship programme.

The school has taken suitable steps to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject and, where political issues are brought to the attention of the students, that reasonable steps will be taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views at all times. Guidance is provided for staff and in the school's curriculum policy.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. Implementation could not be seen as the school is not yet operating. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance provided by the Secretary of State and includes specific information about the local safeguarding board. The policy provides clear guidance about recognising and reporting abuse. The Principal designate has already undertaken higher-level child protection training and two additional members of the leadership team are due to undertake the higher level training before the school opens. All staff will be provided with appropriate training in safeguarding and basic first aid as part of their induction programme prior to the first students being admitted, so that requirements are likely to be met. Some of those involved in appointing staff have already completed recognised training courses in safe recruitment procedures, and others are about to undertake this training. The school has a suitable policy and procedures for recruiting staff. All the required checks are

being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body as they are appointed, and the single central register is being populated as these checks are completed.

The school's policies for promoting students' good behaviour, preventing bullying and ensuring their health and safety, both in school and when on visits, meet requirements. Suitable and secure records will be maintained of the sanctions imposed on students for serious misbehaviour, and the school has established systems for analysing this information so that trends and any undesirable features are recognised promptly. The first aid policy provides appropriate guidance and it is planned to train named staff as higher level first aiders following their appointment and before the school opens. The school's admission and attendance registers are likely to meet requirements.

Work on the school's premises is scheduled to be completed in August 2014. Plans include firm arrangements for a fire risk assessment to be made as soon as the accommodation is ready and before staff and students occupy the premises. There are plans in place to deal with any required actions or recommendations before the school opens. The Principal will provide the Department for Education with copies of the required certificates, evidence of compliance with building regulations and the fire risk assessment. These actions are likely to meet requirements. The school has due regard to the Equality Act 2010, with an action plan drawn up to improve access to the premises, the curriculum and to information.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. All the required checks are being made on staff and the members of the proprietorial body, including their suitability for working with children, as they are appointed. These are being suitably recorded on the school's single central register. The school's records of the checks made on the identity and qualifications (where required) of staff, together with their medical fitness and any other checks, are complete for those already in post and are in the process of being completed for others as they are appointed. The school obtains and checks written references on all applicants in line with its safe recruitment guidelines. The school does not intend to employ staff through an agency but is aware of the procedures to be followed should this be necessary.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. The contractors have only just started on the site and demolition of internal structures has started. Plans and specifications were viewed and discussed with the Principal designate. The proprietors have worked closely with the architect to ensure that the accommodation is well suited to the needs of students. The plans for the accommodation provide a mix of teaching rooms that are suited to teaching small groups and individuals.

There will be specialist facilities to support the curriculum, including a computer suite, science laboratory and multi-gym. A fenced multi-purpose, all-weather games area is being constructed on the school site and will provide facilities for teaching physical education and for students' recreation. Motor mechanics and other vocational courses will be accessed through alternative providers at off-site specialist facilities. All teaching rooms will have access to computer facilities. There will be a high security reception area at the students' point of entry. Offices for senior staff and administrators are sited at strategic points within the school and there will be marked safe exit routes where necessary. The school has ordered furnishings and equipment and these are awaiting delivery for when the first students arrive in September. Mains services are connected to premises and functional. Arrangements have been made for the maintenance of the premises, and for keeping them clean and tidy. Appropriate standards of decoration, internal and external lighting, ventilation, heating and flooring are specified. Arrangements are in hand for a fire risk assessment to have been completed prior to opening.

The school's plans indicate that all the requirements regarding hot and cold water supplies are likely to be met. The washroom facilities for students are sufficient for the number sought. There will be suitable washroom facilities for disabled people, staff and visitors, and appropriately equipped medical facilities for students. There will be separate changing room facilities for male and female students. Although not shown on the plans seen on this visit, the Principal designate has identified the lack of showers and arranged for these to be provided before the school opens. The school is providing laundry facilities to support students' personal care and development, and there will be a small kitchen where students can access labelled drinking water and prepare drinks and snacks.

Provision of information

The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision is likely to meet all regulations.

Recommendation to the Department for Education

Registration

- **YES. This school is likely to meet all regulations when it opens and is recommended for registration.**

Recommended number of day pupils: 50

Recommended number of boarders: N/a

Recommended age range: 13–16 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.