

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

School name	Dixons McMillan Academy
DfE registration number	999/1694
Unique reference number (URN)	1694
Inspection number	446919
Inspection dates	24 June 2014
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, Dixons Academies Charitable Trust, seeks to establish a free school, known as Dixons McMillan Academy, for up to 720 boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. The school will initially occupy part of the existing Dixons Trinity Academy which has spare accommodation as a growing school. Building of the new premises is expected to start in September 2014 and to be completed for August 2015. The school plans to admit its first students on 1 September 2014 when it will open with 112 Year 7 students. The school will then grow year by year to reach its capacity by 2020.

The school will provide mainstream secondary education from across the city. The first intake of Year 7 students are drawn from over 40 primary schools. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs will be admitted. Although precise figures are not available yet, it seems that a higher than expected proportion of students joining the school in September 2014 will speak English as an additional language.

The school's overarching aim is 'to maximise high student achievement, value diversity and focus on positivity, excellence and respect'.

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' personal development matches the age range of the students and reflects the school's aims. The school has drawn on good practice and commercial schemes to develop its own plans to promote students' personal, social and health education and citizenship through the taught curriculum, extra-curricular activities and pastoral support for individual students.

The school's proposed programme focuses on building students' confidence and self-esteem so as to enable them succeed in full-time education and training. The school

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

is highly aspirational for its students. Soon after they start in Year 7, students will visit Leeds University so that they can appreciate at first hand the school's aspirations for them. This will be followed in Year 8 by a visit to Oxford where they will visit colleges and further develop their understanding of aiming high. The school's plans provide a secure basis for preparing students 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, and to get on with others regardless of colour or creed. The school will follow the Bradford agreed syllabus for religious education through which students will study six major religions. A short residential trip to Ullswater early in the autumn term is designed to help Year 7 students develop the new friendships and working relationships they have made since joining the school, and build their personal resilience and confidence in a contrasting environment. The school's policies and procedures promote high expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes to work. Students will be supported in valuing themselves as healthy and valuable members of the community. They will learn about relationships, drugs and substance abuse. They will develop the skills needed to work hard and succeed through taking part in social, sporting and commercial activities with others. They will be helped to make the right decisions when faced with difficult dilemmas and to have the confidence to learn from their mistakes.

Students' cultural development will be promoted through the curriculum, 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 and public institutions and services in England through discrete topics within that 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 a statement is included 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 has worked closely with its host school, Dixons Trinity, to ensure that policies and procedures are complementary, and that information will be shared between the two schools as necessary. 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 children protection

training. Two additional members of the leadership team are due to undertake appropriate higher level training before the school opens. All staff will be provided with appropriate training in safeguarding as part of their induction programme, including completion of an online certified assessment, prior to the first students being admitted. Those involved in appointing staff have completed recognised training courses in safe recruitment procedures. The school has a suitable policy and procedures for recruiting staff, and these are being implemented. 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 electronic records will be maintained of the sanctions imposed on students for serious misbehaviour. The first aid policy provides appropriate guidance and named staff are trained as higher-level first aiders. The school's admission and attendance registers are likely to meet requirements.

The school's temporary accommodation for the academic year 2014–15 is ready for occupation. A fire risk assessment has just been completed and there are no issues for action. All the other checks of the temporary accommodation are complete. The local fire officer has been consulted about the temporary accommodation and the new building. The school has due regard to the Equality Act 2010, with an action plan drawn up to develop 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 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 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 site of the new school is likely to be available in September 2014 and building work is scheduled to start shortly afterwards. In the meantime, the Year 7 intake will be accommodated in a suite of first-floor teaching rooms within the Dixons Trinity school. They will have access to specialist facilities including science laboratories, a

computer suite, gymnasium and playing fields. The accommodation provides well-sized teaching rooms that are equipped with multi-media facilities. The area for students' recreation includes a quiet area. The site is secure and a reception area provides a first point of call for visitors, parents and latecomers. Offices for senior staff and administrators are sited at strategic points within the school. Furnishings and equipment are ready for when the first students arrive in September. Arrangements have been made for the maintenance of the premises, and for keeping them clean and tidy. The standards of decoration, internal and external lighting, ventilation, heating and flooring are appropriate.

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 who are ill. There are separate changing room facilities, with showers, for male and female students. Drinking water is available for students throughout the school day and these sources are suitably signed.

Provision of information

The provision meets all regulations.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The provision meets 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: 720

Recommended number of boarders: N/a

Recommended age range: 11–18 years

Recommended gender of pupils: Mixed

Recommended type of special educational needs: N/a.