

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

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| School name | The Mendip Studio School |
| DfE registration number | 999/1876 |
| Unique reference number (URN) | 1876 |
| Inspection number | 464432 |
| Inspection dates | 2 June 2015 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Best |

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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

- The Mendip Studio School is to be located on the Writhlington Campus in Radstock. The local authority is Bath and North East Somerset. The school will share a large campus with Writhlington School, an 11 to 18 academy, and will have dual use of a sports centre. The school will use part of the Writhlington School's accommodation for the first year while its purpose-built premises are under construction on the campus.
- The two schools will work closely together, sharing facilities, staff and learning resources. Initially, the majority of students attending the new school are likely to be drawn from Writhlington School.
- The school will share most of its policies and procedures with Writhlington School. Staff expertise will also be shared.
- The school is sponsored by the Dragonfly Education Trust and is due to open on 1 September 2015. The school has applied to be registered to admit up to 300 boys and girls in the age range 14 to 19 years. It will admit up to 100 students in Years 9 and 11 in its first year and grow to capacity by September 2017.
- There are currently 98 students registered for enrolment. Two of these students have education and health and care plans or statements of special educational need. The school will be non-selective and intends to admit disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The school aims to 'enable students to gain the attributes and competencies which turn ideas into actions'.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a studio school for:

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| Number of day pupils | 300 |
| Age range | 14–19 years |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |

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

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014²

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

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. Implementation could not be seen.
- The school's proposed provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development aims is for them to take their place in society as valued, economically independent and responsible citizens. It pays particular attention to students developing their self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge as they enter adulthood by preparing them for the next stage of their education, training and employment.
- The school's comprehensive plans for students' personal, social and health education include: encouraging respect for the diversity of beliefs and opinions; developing the ability to distinguish between right and wrong; promoting respect for the needs, interests and feelings of others; and providing meaningful links with the world of work and the wider community.
- The school has devised a planned programme of topics and projects to run over a three-year period. These will include visits out of school and visiting speakers. Students will develop their understanding of civil and criminal law, and learn about the work of public institutions and services in England. They will learn about democracy, freedom of speech and individual liberty. In developing the school's charter, students will learn at first-hand the link between rights and responsibilities.
- School leaders rightly identify that, while just over 15 miles from the centre of Bristol, the vast majority of students come from a White British background and live in predominantly rural areas. They therefore plan to organise visits to provide students with opportunities to visit places of worship and widen their experience of people from different cultures and beliefs, at first hand. In addition, leaders recognise that students' awareness and understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation need to be raised in order that they are prepared well for life beyond school.

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/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.

- Students will participate in a number of community projects, including fund raising for charity and supporting links with partner schools in Rwanda and China. Planned themes within the programme for students' economic and health education will provide students with guidance for gaining employment, managing money and living independently. Relationships, substance and alcohol abuse, together with guidance about personal care and mental well-being, are woven into the provision.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide a framework within which students will be helped to develop an understanding of right and wrong and come to appreciate the consequences of actions and personal decisions. From visits outside the school's immediate area, they will learn about different cultures and beliefs, in order to develop and build their respect for the diversity of others.
- Students will not study religious education as a discrete subject. Their knowledge and understanding of different faiths and beliefs will be developed through tutor time and assemblies. These will include time for quiet reflection and the opportunity to explore and share their own values and beliefs. Planned themes encompass a variety of issues and questions from a multi-faith perspective, aimed at supporting students' understanding and respect for the diversity of viewpoints and cultures.
- The school has taken steps to ensure that the quality of teaching and the planned curriculum, including provision for students' personal development, is free from partisan political or religious views. Guidance for staff makes it clear that, where any political issues are discussed, a balanced view is always presented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. Implementation could not be seen in full.
- All the required policy documents have been produced, including detailed and comprehensive policies for managing confidential reporting (whistleblowing), safer recruitment, child protection and safeguarding, including 'disqualification by association', positive behaviour management, first aid and anti-bullying have been prepared in accordance with requirements. Any incidents of serious misbehaviour will be logged on a secure electronic recording system.
- Senior staff are trained in safe recruitment and they apply the school's policy rigorously in making appointments. All the required checks are made on staff prior to their appointment and these are recorded systematically on a single central register.
- The training of all staff in child protection is firmly scheduled, as part of the induction programme, at the start of the new school year and before the first students arrive. Staff who are appointed at a later date will be briefed on child

protection procedures, as part of their induction. The lead person for child protection is trained to the required level. Additional staff members have either completed the higher level training or will do so before the school opens.

- Trained staff have been identified to take responsibility for first aid, and further training will be provided as the school expands. The first aid policy is compliant; it includes advice about calling for medical help and for dealing with spilt body fluids.
- Suitable policies have been prepared for all the required aspects of health and safety, including making risk assessments and the procedures for taking action to reduce any identified risk. A fire safety risk assessment has been completed for the school's temporary accommodation for its first year of operation. Some minor deficiencies, such as the need for additional signage, have been identified for action before the school opens and these are being addressed; the overall fire risk is deemed to be low and the deficiencies have been judged as 'trivial' by the risk assessor. The premises are therefore in compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Admission and attendance registers will be maintained electronically. The format of these registers is likely to meet requirements.

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

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. All the required checks have been completed for the proprietors and for staff appointed to date. These are recorded on a suitable single central register.
- Checks are completed systematically and entries made on the register updated as new staff are appointed. The school does not intend to employ agency supply staff but is aware of its responsibilities to conduct the required checks should supply staff be appointed in the future.
- The school has established a reciprocal arrangement whereby the single central registers for the school, Writhlington School and the sports centre are available to each other.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. The school will open, in September 2015, in temporary accommodation made available by Writhlington School; this was viewed during the inspection visit. The school will have its own entrance from the shared central area of the campus.
- A range of teaching rooms and spaces are designated for the school's use, including some workshop facilities. Other specialist facilities will be provided for the school by Writhlington School. The arrangements for this have been

thoroughly discussed between the respective school leaders and likely to be highly effective. All the teaching rooms are well-equipped, well lit and maintained to a high standard.

- The school will have its own washroom facilities, and these are sufficient for the initial intake. Showers and changing rooms are provided in the adjacent sports centre. The hot and cold water supplies are compliant and students will have access to suitably labelled drinking water throughout the school day.
- Construction of the school's permanent accommodation is scheduled to begin in the autumn term 2015. The building will be a mirror image of the recently opened post-16 block and will sit beside it on what was the site of part of the previous Writhlington School. The Department of Education (DfE) will wish to continue to monitor the progress of the new build.
- Initially, students will be admitted to Years 9 and 11 only; the temporary accommodation is sufficient for this number. There are suitable arrangements for medical examination or treatment for students who may be ill, which is adjacent to an existing toilet and has a hand-washing facility with running hot and cold water. There is sufficient outside space for students' recreation, including playing fields and all-weather sport facilities. The accommodation is secure.

Part 6. Provision of information

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. The school's website contains all the required information including the provision of a prospectus for parents and others. The school's safeguarding policy is provided in full and other policies are signposted in accordance with requirements.
- The school intends to provide termly written reports to parents. Leaders are aware of the requirements to provide specified information to local authorities, and to publish reports and other information, as required.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- All the requirements for this standard are likely to be met. The school's complaints procedures are clearly outline and include the provision for a panel hearing, if required. The school has recently amended its original policy to reflect the latest independent school regulations regarding the recording of complaints, whether upheld or not.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The school is likely to meet all of the requirements for registration. The school's senior leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Their plans and policies actively promote students' well-being and academic progress.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have drawn up an action plan to improve access to the premises, the curriculum and to information.

Advice to the Secretary of State for Education

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| Overall outcome | The school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards when it opens |
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| Recommended number of day pupils | 300 |
| Recommended age range | 14–19 years |
| Recommended gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Recommended type of special educational needs | N/A |