

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

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| School name | Bicester Technology Studio |
| DfE registration number | 931/4012 |
| Unique reference number (URN) | 142863 |
| Inspection number | 10020235 |
| Inspection dates | 25 May 2016 |
| Reporting inspector | Simon Hughes, Her Majesty's Inspector |



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

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 inspector undertook a tour of the school site which is currently under construction. He reviewed the architect's plans and scrutinised information uploaded to the technology studio's website. The inspector examined the single central record of staff recruitment checks and reviewed it once additions were made. He also looked at a wide range of policies and proposed procedures.

The inspector met with the principal and vice-principal designate, the proprietor's representative and the chair of the governing body. He also met with the project manager and the builder's agent who led the tour of the construction site.

Information about the registration

The school is seeking registration as a free school for:

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Number of day pupils | 310 |
| Age range | 14–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Type of special educational needs | Not applicable |

Context of the school

Bicester Technology Studio is located on the grounds of one of the proprietor's other secondary schools, The Bicester School. It is situated on the outskirts of Bicester but close to major motorway and railway networks.

The proposed technology studio will provide purpose-built, state-of-the-art premises for 310 boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 19.

The proposed technology studio is on track to start operating in the first week of September 2016. It will admit approximately 60 Year 10 learners and around 50

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.

learners in Year 12. It is set to expand to its full operational capacity in the following year.

Learners will join the technology studio from a catchment area within a radius of 15 miles. This covers several locations of population expansion and business innovation. The Activate Learning Educational Trust (the proprietor) submitted its application to found this establishment as a response to the growing population in Bicester and the needs of businesses locally.

The proprietor and senior leaders have the full and enthusiastic support from local business leaders through Bicester Vision, a business networking forum in the town.

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 |
|------------------------|--|

| | |
|--|-------|
| Recommended number of day pupils | 310 |
| Recommended age range | 14–19 |
| Recommended gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Recommended type of special educational needs | N/A |

Compliance with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014³

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

The school is likely to meet all the standards in relation to this part. Curriculum planning documents show that the technology studio intends to provide imaginative and innovative ways for learners to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The whole ethos of the technology studio is orientated towards sustainable development. Learners will engage with appropriate content in the 'big idea' section of the curriculum. This will provide them with opportunities to explore their creativity and engage with issues of enduring and emerging concern. Learners will also be provided with opportunities to engage with the wider community through a range of work placements and business ventures. The school has clear written policies intended to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different beliefs or traditions. It has planned effectively to ensure that learners are at a very low risk of radicalisation.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school is likely to meet all of the standards in this part. Documentary and other evidence indicate that most of the required policies or measures are all in place, including for health, safety (including fire safety), first aid and safeguarding.

The risk assessment policy is currently a high-level principled document which sets out the nature of risk assessment and how it should be governed. The policy does not yet set out the procedures or processes which will assess or manage the risks in practical terms. This is out of step with other policies which are detailed, focused and professionally published. Leaders are fully aware that they need to undertake or commission a full risk assessment and audit once the site is handed over in August 2016. Appropriate thought has been given, for example, to the storage of hazardous chemicals, network security and 'cable management', and this good practice is to be replicated in all other aspects of the risk assessment process.

The technology studio's anti-bullying policy is sensible and well thought out. It gives appropriate advice to staff, learners and parents on how to identify and combat the various forms of bullying. It also pays appropriate attention to various forms of technology-based bullying, via social media or cyber bullying, given the high levels of engagement with technology intended. Guidance also points to the plans for tackling bullying which is racial or sexually orientated. Robust procedures are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. Senior staff are trained in safer recruitment. Plans were seen that show the intention to extend this to governors.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283/contents/made. Part 1 to Schedule 1 is not reported against because it does not apply to academies, free schools, studio schools and UTCs.

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

The requirements in this section are likely to be met in full. All persons to be employed at the school or volunteers, as well as members of the proprietorial body corporate, are judged to be 'fit and proper'. All teaching staff have the appropriate professional qualifications and experience to execute their duties purposefully. Leaders are building appropriate relationships with education employment businesses locally so that any staff deployed on a temporary basis are appropriately checked by the agency. All records of recruitment checks made on staff are correctly entered onto a single central record. The technology studio benefits from an experienced human resources division at the sponsoring multi-academy trust.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards. The new building is carefully planned to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety and to promote their effective learning. Teaching and learning spaces are purpose-built and state of the art, and will provide suitable opportunities for a range of different activities. The number of washrooms for the proposed number of learners is appropriate. Areas for the preparation and serving of food are likely to meet the relevant requirements. The technology studio will share the facilities of the school next door to provide outdoor spaces for sports and physical education. It will also use the extensive facilities of the local leisure centre. Suitable recreation spaces have been planned internally as well as in the proposed landscaping to the exterior of the building.

Part 6. Provision of information

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards. All the required policies are available to parents on request and some are already on the school's website. These include the safeguarding policy and related policies which all meet requirements.

Currently, leaders use a web-based application to share and publish documents. This means that the policies can be edited and amended as needed. All policies derive from strong exemplars, either found in other parts of the multi-academy trust or from the local authority.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

The school is likely to meet all the relevant standards. The complaints policy is detailed, clearly written and sets out the necessary steps for the efficient handling of complaints. It makes cross-references to other policies such as those relating to safeguarding and confidentiality of information. The policy also indicates the relevant personnel who will be assigned to handle complaints should they arise.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Leaders are already demonstrating significant capacity to run and maintain an effective educational establishment. They have assembled a full range of relevant policies, procedures and practices which are likely to ensure that all requirements will be met.

Leaders demonstrate a good ability to form positive, purposeful and productive relationships with key stakeholders. They are surrounded by local politicians, business people and educationists who are providing expertise and support.

The Activate Learning Educational Trust has provided strategic direction for the project. It provides rigorous challenge to leaders but also ensures that 'back office' functions are handled efficiently and effectively by their own central staff.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

The school has a number of equality policies in place. These include an appropriate accessibility plan to fulfil its duties under the Equality Act 2010. This complements the inclusive building design principles. The proposed technology studio has been designed in such a way that any learner with a protected characteristic can thrive and achieve well in the setting.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Not applicable.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016