

Peak Forest

First Steps Together, Stockport Road, Hyde SK14 3QF

Inspection date

10 June 2025

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2, 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(a)

- At the school's last standard inspection in October 2024, inspectors found that the range of subjects that pupils studied was limited. The school had not devised a curriculum that was broad enough to give pupils the full range of educational experiences as set out in the independent school standards (the standards). Notably, there was no provision for human and social education. Added to this, inspectors also found that the knowledge that pupils should learn had not been defined in some subjects. These factors combined to limit the breadth of knowledge that pupils gained.
- Inspectors also found that the school did not use information about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Nor did the curriculum take these needs into account sufficiently.
- At the time of this progress monitoring inspection, the proprietor has made sure that the breadth of the curriculum for all pupils meets requirements. Pupils now learn the full range of subjects on offer, including humanities. The school has set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn within each curriculum subject. Alongside this, the school has provided training for staff to help them to deliver the curriculum in line with its expectations.

Paragraph 3, 3(d)

- At the standard inspection, inspectors found that the school did not provide teachers with information about pupils' starting points and the gaps that existed in their knowledge. Additionally, some information about the needs of pupils with SEND lacked enough detail to be useful. Some pupils were not supported sufficiently in order to access the curriculum.
- The proprietor has put in place a comprehensive assessment package to fully determine gaps in pupils' knowledge when they join the school. This is coupled with a clearer focus on pupils' targets as set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils now have short-term targets that are specific to them and regularly reviewed. In addition,

staff benefit from the support of external professionals to explore potential strategies to help pupils to learn well, based on their needs.

- The standards in this part are now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding policy reflects the current statutory guidance and is available in paper form as the school does not have a website. There are effective systems in place to keep pupils safe. Staff receive training that helps them to understand the procedures for identifying and reporting any concerns they may have. Pupils feel confident that staff would take swift action if they shared a concern with them.
- The standard in this part continues to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34 to 34(1)(b)

- At the last inspection, inspectors found that the proprietor had not carried out its statutory responsibilities to ensure that all of the standards were consistently met. Although the proprietor had made strides to train and support a new staff team, it had not ensured that the education provided by the school impacted as positively as it should on all pupils.
- The proprietor has acted swiftly to ensure that the standards are met. For example, it makes use of external consultants with the relevant background and expertise to support the development of the school.
- There is a programme of training in place for staff which is regularly reviewed. The school checks on the impact of this through regular monitoring of the implementation of the curriculum and pupils' experiences at the school. The proprietor's plans to appoint additional staff are carefully considered to ensure that all aspects of the quality of education and pupils' welfare are supported.
- The standard in this part is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

School details

Unique reference number	150682
DfE registration number	357/6008
Inspection number	10397120

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	First Steps Together Ltd
Chair	Matthew Bonilla
Headteacher	Natalie Ogden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £70,000
Telephone number	07940 558506
Website	www.firststepstogether.online
Email address	n.ogden@firststepstogether.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 October 2024

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place on 15 to 17 October 2024.
- The school operates from premises at Stockport Road, Hyde SK14 3QF. The school is registered to admit up to 32 pupils.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and autism. All of the pupils have an EHC plan.

- The school makes use of four unregistered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This is the school's first monitoring inspection following the standard inspection in October 2024.
- The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. The action plan was reviewed by Ofsted on 6 March 2025 and was evaluated to be not acceptable. The DfE rejected the school's action plan.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector met with some teachers and other staff.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. This included records of concern, the safeguarding policy and the single central record.

The school's proposed change to the age range of pupils

The school has applied to the DfE to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The material change has already been implemented.**

Part 1. Quality of education provided

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

- The school requested an increase in the age range from 11 to 14, to 11 to 16 years. The school has put a suitable key stage 4 curriculum in place, including relationships and sex education, personal, social, health and economic education, and careers education. This is suitable to meet the needs of pupils in key stage 4 should the material change be approved. Alongside this, the school provides training for staff to support the implementation of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs effectively.
- The school's offer for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been carefully considered for the additional age range. This includes how pupils will learn about fundamental British values and the protected characteristics.
- Arrangements for the quality assurance of the key stage 4 curriculum have been put in place. This is in addition to the appointment of subject specialists who have the knowledge and expertise to explain new learning in key stage 4 with clarity.
- These standards are likely to be met should the material change be approved.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The proprietor has ensured that leaders have the knowledge required to ensure that the standards are likely to be met should the material change be approved. For example, the school draws successfully on external support to ensure that the education that pupils receive has a positive impact on them.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the material change is approved.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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