

Inspection of Kershaw Wood

Talbot Street, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 7DG

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Kershaw Wood is a welcoming and friendly school. Warm and positive relationships underpin this caring learning community. Pupils say that they are happy. The parents and carers who spoke to inspectors are very pleased with the school. One parent summed up the views of others when they said, 'This school is the best place for my child.'

The school has high expectations for all pupils' achievement. The pupils understand these expectations and try their hardest to meet them. Many have experienced a very difficult start to their education. Most start at the school after a significant amount of time out of education. The school positively impacts pupils' experience of education and their self-confidence. In a short space of time, staff have built trust with both pupils and parents. Staff use trauma-informed approaches consistently to support pupils when they struggle to regulate their emotions. Once settled, pupils' behaviour improves. They engage with learning and make some positive memories.

The school has developed a curriculum that builds from pupils' starting points. It considers the need for pupils to be 'ready to learn'. However, some subjects do not identify exactly what pupils should learn. Aspects of the curriculum are not consistently implemented.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Staff identify pupils' academic gaps and emotional needs when they start at the school. Initially, staff prioritise pupils' attendance and building their confidence. They establish a range of approaches to learning to support pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most of the general strategies staff use to support pupils are effective. Staff receive information about pupils' needs through individual learning plans. However, these do not always contain the precise information and targets staff need to know. As a result, not all staff understand the best ways to support these pupils in their learning.

The school is in the process of designing an ambitious curriculum. Some adjustments have been made to the curriculum to ensure it meets pupils' needs. In some subjects, such as mathematics, what pupils should learn and when is clearly and logically planned. However, in other subjects, it is unclear exactly what teachers intend pupils to know and remember. In several subjects, the curriculum is not implemented consistently. Some activities and work given to pupils do not always support them in learning the intended curriculum. As a result, pupils struggle to recall the important knowledge they need.

Teachers use different ways to check pupils' understanding during lessons. They use the information gathered to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, in the subjects where it is less clear what pupils should be learning, teachers cannot judge accurately how well pupils have learned key knowledge.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities, including one-to-one reading with staff. Staff give precise intervention to pupils who need extra support with their phonics, which helps them to become more accurate and fluent readers. The school helps older pupils to fill any gaps in their reading knowledge. As a result, they become more confident readers.

The school's ethos is seen especially in its high-quality pastoral care. Staff provide the support pupils need to feel safe and ready to learn. Staff know the things that might upset or 'trigger' pupils. Pupils try hard to manage their emotions and regulate their behaviour. Many enjoy their time at school. The school works closely with families when a pupil struggles to attend school. Bespoke support packages are used to increase the time pupils spend in school. As a result, most pupils' attendance improves significantly.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development. In the short time the school has been open, pupils have benefited from a large range of trips and visits that broaden their experiences. For example, they have been to a Hindu temple to learn about difference in society. Pupils enjoy regular swimming lessons that help them to feel more confident in water. They also enjoy the regular outdoor education opportunities that enrich the curriculum. Personal, social, health and economic education lessons are responsive to situations that arise in the school. Pupils are supported in socialising, cooperating and communicating with others. They learn about fundamental British values. Staff teach pupils how to identify risks and keep safe, including when online. Pupils learn how to maintain a healthy mind and body. Their 'life skills' lessons teach them important skills such as how to cook. Pupils understand why it is important to respect people who may be different to them. Much of this activity prepares pupils well for their next steps.

Those responsible for the school know it well. They visit regularly and meet with school leaders every week. This helps them to understand the school's strengths and areas for development, as well as the issues staff regularly deal with. They understand their statutory duties and have a good understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). The proprietor and senior leaders have prioritised staff training to support pupils' behaviour. However, they have not focused on helping staff to develop their teaching through agreed methods and practices. Without this direction and training, staff have not always known the best ways to teach and check on pupils' learning.

The premises are well maintained. The school makes regular and thorough checks to ensure all health and safety and fire safety regulations are met. Risk assessments are updated regularly. Policies are up to date and reflect the latest national guidance. The school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The policies for relationships and health education and safeguarding are available on the school's website.

Staff say that they are well cared for. Their well-being and workload are considered carefully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In less well-developed subjects, the important knowledge and skills pupils are expected to know and remember are not clear. In these subjects, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of what they are learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum clearly defines the key content pupils will learn over time in all subjects.
- There are occasions when the learning activities and work given to pupils do not always support them in knowing and remembering key knowledge. When this is the case, pupils struggle to recall the important knowledge they need. The school needs to ensure that staff have the teaching expertise they need to deliver the intended curriculum, including planning precise and purposeful activities, to help all pupils build knowledge consistently well.
- Staff do not have the precise information they need about pupils and do not use assessment as effectively as they should. This lack of clarity is evident in pupils' support strategies and interventions, as well as in some subject areas. This hinders staff from identifying and then addressing any gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that assessment systems provide staff with a precise understanding of all pupils' needs and whether pupils have learned the key knowledge needed to succeed.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	150857
DfE registration number	830/6062
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10374837
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	First Steps Together Ltd
Chair	Matthew Bonilla
Headteacher	Natalie Ogden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,000 to £130,000
Telephone number	03301180974
Website	www.firststepstogether.uk
Email address	admin@firststepstogether.uk

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education (DfE) on 13 August 2024. This is its first standard inspection.
- Kershaw Wood school is located at Talbot Street, Glossop, Derbyshire, SK13 7DG
- The school provides education for pupils aged seven to 11 who have autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cognitive and learning needs, speech, language and communication needs, specific learning difficulties and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to admit 36 pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteachers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school's policies and risk assessments.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors spoke to parents during the morning school drop-off as there was just one response on the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff. Inspectors talked with pupils to discuss different aspects of the school's provision.
- Inspectors toured the premises and reviewed the school's facilities.

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

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet 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: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- There is a sufficiently well-planned curriculum in place that starts in key stage 1. The overview documents provided show that this curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum.
- Some of these overviews lack the detail and precision around exactly how teachers are going to focus on the identified core knowledge and assessment. However, leaders have acknowledged that the curriculum remains a work in progress. The school has already refined the curriculum as it tests out what works best for its pupils.
- Leaders have identified what improvement work needs to be done to the curriculum in their school development plan and they have accessed some external support to further enhance this work.
- The physical layout of the school allows for there to be a separation of the younger pupils and those who need more of a continuous provision approach to learning from older pupils.

Information about the material change inspection

- The proprietor has requested a material change to extend the age range to pupils aged five to 11.
- Inspectors considered the school's likely compliance with standards relating to curriculum; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education; safeguarding; and leadership and management if the material change is approved.
- Inspectors reviewed curriculum documents related to the provision of key stage 1 education and viewed some sample assessment documents and resources that had been produced for the planned subjects.
- The lead inspector toured the building and discussed with leaders how the space would be used and divided to accommodate younger pupils.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Adrian O'Malley

Ofsted Inspector

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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

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