



Job Description: Head of School

Job Title:	Head of School
Salary:	£38,000 - £46,000
Location:	Greater Manchester
Hours of Work:	Monday – Friday 8:15 – 16:00 – Term Time
Line Manager:	Senior Head of School
How to apply:	www.firststepseducation.uk/apply
Contact Details:	0330 118 0974

Job Purpose

The Head of School will provide strong, visible, and proactive leadership within their school setting, ensuring that high expectations are embedded across all areas of learning, behaviour, attendance, and safeguarding. Reporting directly to the Senior Head of School, the postholder will be responsible for the daily operational management of their school and for securing a positive, aspirational culture in which pupils with SEMH and SEN needs can thrive. As a key leader within First Steps Together, the Head of School will uphold organisational values, policies, and practices in accordance with statutory guidance and current education legislation.

The postholder will work closely with the Senior Head of School and the Head of Quality of Education to ensure high quality teaching, consistent behaviour strategies, and effective pastoral care. They will lead the implementation of support strategies swiftly and robustly, embedding SEND appropriate approaches, therapeutic practice, and restorative methods to meet the needs of all pupils. A core part of the role is to build strong relationships with parents, carers, and external agencies to support the progress, engagement, and wellbeing of learners, quality teaching, consistent behaviour strategies, and effective pastoral care. They will lead the implementation of support strategies swiftly and robustly, embedding SEND appropriate approaches, therapeutic practice, and restorative methods to meet the needs of all pupils. A core part of the role is to build strong relationships with parents, carers, and external agencies to support the progress, engagement, and wellbeing of learners.

As Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), the Head of School will take a central role in safeguarding practice, ensuring that the school is consistently Ofsted ready through robust systems, accurate recordkeeping, high quality evidence trails, and strong compliance with the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). They will lead by example, uphold high standards of conduct, and contribute to a whole school culture of continuous improvement, staff development, and reflective practice.

Safeguarding

Here at First Steps Together, we are committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and promoting that commitment. We expect all our staff and volunteers to share in it, too, which is why, as part of the selection process, we will conduct all the necessary checks to ensure you do not pose any risk of harm in your role here. Join us and you will be expected to actively contribute to our safeguarding commitment and promote child welfare in line with the school's Child Protection Policy.

If ever there is a concern or issue, you will be ready to report it to your Designated Safeguarding Lead or, in their absence, any Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

Key Responsibilities

1) Strategic Direction and Development

- Work with the Head of Quality of Education to ensure a curriculum that meets pupil needs, developmental stages, and SEMH/SEN profiles.
- Implement and promote the school vision as set by the Senior Head of School, ensuring consistency in expectations and practice.
- Model and reinforce the school's values daily, supporting a collaborative and consistent culture across the staff team.
- Contribute to the strategic development and delivery of the School Improvement Plan, ensuring that actions drive measurable improvement.
- Always maintain an Ofsted ready school environment through strong evidence trails, accurate documentation, and compliance with statutory guidance.
- Support the evaluation of teaching and learning and help staff to develop reflective, improved practice.
- Promote high expectations for pupil attainment, progress, engagement, and wellbeing.

2) Accountability and Leadership

- Maintain full accountability for the day to day operational leadership of the school, ensuring high standards of behaviour, attendance, teaching, and pupil engagement.
- Monitor staff performance, provide constructive challenge where needed, and escalate concerns appropriately to the Senior Head of School.
- Fulfil responsibilities as the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), ensuring effective safeguarding practice and accurate recordkeeping.
- Maintain robust systems for monitoring teaching, behaviour, learning, and interventions, demonstrating impact clearly.
- Provide regular, proactive updates to the Senior Head of School regarding school performance, significant events, and emerging priorities.
- Ensure all school policies and statutory requirements are adhered to consistently and effectively.

3) Leading Teaching and Learning

- Work with teachers and support staff to identify pupil needs and ensure timely interventions and support strategies.
- Monitor teaching and learning through lesson observations, learning walks, book looks, and pupil voice.
- Provide constructive, developmental feedback to staff, celebrating strengths and addressing areas for improvement.
- Collaborate with the SENDCO to ensure a strong programme of personalised learning, interventions, and support.
- Maintain oversight of all pupil documentation including behaviour plans, risk assessments, ILPs, and progress trackers.
- Promote a reflective, collaborative learning environment that values shared practice across FST schools.

4) Management of Staff

- Build a positive professional learning community where staff feel supported, valued, and motivated.
- Maintain an open door leadership approach, fostering trust and positive communication.
- Lead staff briefings, assemblies, and internal training to reinforce expectations, wellbeing, and professional growth.
- Oversee the appraisal process, ensuring objectives drive staff development and pupil progress.
- Manage and supervise staff, ensuring effective deployment and professional accountability.
- Coordinate the school day, staff deployment, supervision arrangements, and pupil movement throughout the site.

5) Recruitment, Induction & Workforce Development

- Support the Senior Head of School with recruitment, including shortlisting, interviewing, and selection of suitable candidates.
- Lead high quality induction processes for new staff, ensuring understanding of safeguarding,

expectations, procedures, and school culture.

- Identify training needs and ensure staff access relevant CPD in a timely manner.
- Ensure mandatory training is completed within required timeframes and that learning is embedded into practice.
- Lead staff meetings and wellbeing/teambuilding activities to strengthen whole school cohesion.

6) School Targets

- Set, monitor, and review termly school targets relating to behaviour, attendance, engagement, and learning outcomes.
- Ensure behaviour plans are updated each term and shared with pupils and parents.
- Oversee reward systems, incentives, extracurricular activities, and enrichment opportunities that promote positive behaviours.
- Coordinate offsite learning opportunities that contribute to pupils' personal development and wellbeing.

7) Behaviour Leadership and Culture

- Promote a positive, respectful school culture rooted in restorative and relational approaches.
- Ensure behaviour incidents, refusals to engage, and safeguarding concerns are accurately recorded on IRIS.
- Lead restorative conversations to support pupil reflection, emotional regulation, and relationship repair.
- Maintain consistent communication with parents through a balance of positive and corrective contact, including praise calls, postcards, and celebrations.
- Ensure expectations for conduct, engagement, and relationships are understood and consistently upheld across the school.
- Support staff in implementing behaviour plans, deescalation approaches, and targeted interventions.
- Promote a culture where pupils develop positive relationships, resilience, emotional literacy, and mutual respect.

8) Relationships with Parents and Agencies

- Build and maintain strong relationships with parents, carers, and external professionals.
- Produce twice yearly school reports and attend parents' evenings.
- Liaise with previous schools to support smooth transitions for new pupils.
- Hold regular parent meetings regarding learning, attendance, and behaviour.

9) Resources and School Environment

- Manage the allocated school budget responsibly, ensuring value for money and positive impact on pupils.
- Organise enrichment and offsite activities that promote positive behaviours and self-esteem.
- Ensure reward systems and incentives are maintained and embedded across the school.

10) Senior Leadership Team Responsibilities

- Contribute actively as a member of the Senior Leadership Team, providing leadership across the school setting.
- Bring forward new ideas, strategies, and initiatives that contribute to continuous school improvement.
- Prepare and maintain annual overviews of school priority areas and focus themes.
- Promote and embed restorative approaches through curriculum, behaviour systems, staff practice, and assemblies.

Person Specification

Qualifications & Training

Essential

- Must have English, Maths and Science GCSE at grade 5 or above (or equivalent qualification).
- Evidence of relevant professional development linked to leadership, behaviour, safeguarding, inclusion, or SEMH/SEN practice.
- Safeguarding training to DSL/DDSL standard (or willingness to undertake immediately upon appointment).

Desirable

- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent teaching qualification.
- Leadership qualification such as NPQLT, NPQLBC, NPQSL or NPQH.
- Additional training in trauma informed practice, mental health, deescalation, or therapeutic interventions.

Experience

Essential

- Previous experience in a SEN/SEMH setting is essential.
- Must have prior leadership experience, ideally within a specialist, SEMH, SEN or alternative provision environment.
- Experience leading or managing staff, including performance and professional development.
- Experience improving outcomes for pupils with complex needs and behavioural, social or emotional barriers.
- Experience implementing behaviour culture, restorative approaches, and relational practice.
- Experience working with external agencies, safeguarding partners and multidisciplinary teams.
- Experience contributing to school improvement, self evaluation or quality assurance processes.

Desirable

- Experience leading or supporting a school through Ofsted inspection or external monitoring.
- Experience designing and delivering staff CPD or coaching programmes.
- Experience acting as a DSL/DDSL or holding significant safeguarding leadership responsibility.

Knowledge & Understanding

Essential

- Strong understanding of SEMH/SEN needs, trauma-informed practice, behaviour regulation, and inclusive pedagogy.
- Deep knowledge of safeguarding legislation, KCSIE, safer working practices, and multiagency safeguarding.
- Understanding of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and expectations for specialist provisions.
- Knowledge of curriculum, assessment, progress tracking and personalised learning (e.g., ILPs, EFL, BKSB).
- Understanding of statutory responsibilities around behaviour, attendance, SEND, curriculum and alternative provision.

Desirable

- Familiarity with IRIS or similar behaviour/safeguarding monitoring systems.
- Knowledge of therapeutic or multidisciplinary approaches such as ELSA, Thrive, Nurture or Zones of Regulation.

Safeguarding

Essential

- Strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*.
- Must be able to undertake the role of Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and actively support the DSL.
- Ability to identify, respond to, and report safeguarding concerns promptly and accurately.
- Experience working with safeguarding partners such as Early Help, social care, and external professionals.

- Ability to maintain accurate, confidential safeguarding records and evidence trails.
- Understanding of contextual safeguarding and the heightened vulnerabilities of pupils with SEMH/SEN.

Desirable

- Previous experience as a DSL, DDSL or safeguarding lead in a specialist or alternative setting.
- Completion of advanced safeguarding or child protection training.

Leadership & Management Skills

Essential

- Ability to lead, motivate and hold staff accountable with fairness and clarity.
- Strong decision making skills with the ability to prioritise and manage competing demands.
- Confidence in analysing data and using evidence to drive improvement.
- Ability to lead behaviour culture, restorative practice and staff expectations.
- Ability to build a positive, supportive staff culture focused on wellbeing and continuous development.

Desirable

- Experience developing or implementing whole school systems (e.g., behaviour, attendance, safeguarding).

Communication & Interpersonal Skills

Essential

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills with pupils, staff, parents and external agencies.
- Ability to remain calm, nurturing and relational during challenging or high stress situations.
- Ability to manage difficult conversations professionally and sensitively.
- Strong ability to build positive, trusting relationships rooted in consistency, empathy and respect.

Personal Qualities

Essential

- Passionate about improving the life chances of pupils with SEMH/SEN needs.
- Emotionally resilient and able to remain solution-focused under pressure.
- Highly reliable, proactive, and committed to professional accountability.
- Reflective practitioner dedicated to continuous improvement.
- Visible, approachable and hands on leadership style.

Review

The nature of this role means that this job description will be subject to an annual review with the potential for amendment or modification at any time after consultation directly with you. It by no means acts as a comprehensive statement of procedures and is just a way of setting out all the main expectations we will have of you, here in the role as you deliver an impassioned and genuinely caring experience to our young people.