

Peak Forest School

Stockport Road, Hyde SK14 3QF

Inspection dates

18 April 2024

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2, 2(1)-2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a)-2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- At the first pre-registration inspection, this standard was judged not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has produced an appropriate curriculum policy that sets out a broad and balanced curriculum. This policy shows the consideration that has been given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. In addition, the policy shows how pupils will learn about the fundamental British values, for example through assemblies and visits to local places of interest.
- The curriculum policy is underpinned by suitable schemes of work for each subject. The school's curriculum planning contains the necessary detail about the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember in each subject.
- The curriculum plans demonstrate the school's understanding of the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils who may join the school.
- The school has thought carefully about how each subject will be taught. The school has developed a suitable programme of training for staff to enable them to deliver the subject curriculums well. It has ensured that the appropriate resources are in place to support the delivery of each subject curriculum.
- The school has given suitable consideration for how personal, social, health and economic education will be taught. Pupils will learn through timetabled lessons as well as in assemblies, and through the school's careers programme. Pupils' emotional well-being is central to leaders' plans for the school. Leaders have considered how pupils will learn about different religions and cultures. Leaders' plans show regard for the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Paragraph 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(d)-2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 2A(3)

- Leaders have taken into account the statutory guidance when deciding what pupils will learn in the sex, relationships and health education curriculum. There are plans in place for how leaders will communicate the content of the curriculum with parents and carers through the induction process for new pupils. This information is published

on the website for parents to access, along with information about how parents can choose to withdraw their child from the non-statutory aspects of this curriculum.

Paragraph 3, 3(a)-3(j)

- At the first pre-registration inspection, this standard was judged not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has appointed senior leaders with relevant experience for their roles.
- The proprietor has appointed a headteacher. There are staff from the proprietor's central administration and management team who already work at the school. The proprietor has appointed two deputy headteachers. One is responsible for the curriculum development, and the other is responsible for behaviour. Staff who have been appointed have the relevant experience and expertise to carry out their roles well.
- The curriculum plans contain the necessary detail needed for teachers to understand leaders' intentions for how the curriculum should be taught. The school has given careful thought to how they want the curriculum to be delivered and what staff training will look like to reflect this.
- The proprietor and the leadership team have the knowledge, skills and experience to check that the curriculum is meeting pupils' needs and supporting pupils to learn well.

Paragraph 4

- The school has a suitable assessment policy in place.
- The school has devised appropriate systems for assessing pupils' attainment and emotional needs on entry to the school. This assessment information will support staff to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, as pupils who join the school may have missed out on some of their previous education. This information will also help teachers to adapt learning based on what pupils already know. Leaders will share relevant information about pupils' performance with parents and the proprietor at regular intervals.
- As a result of the proprietor's actions since the previous pre-registration inspection, the independent school standards ('the standards') in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraph 5, 5(a)-5(d)

- The proposed curriculum shows the school's consideration for pupils' SMSC development. The curriculum plans show how pupils will learn about different faiths, cultures and religions. This learning will be enhanced by links with the local community and visitors to the school.
- The school's policies and schemes of work show the school's consideration for the promotion of fundamental British values. For instance, these are set out in policies such as the behaviour policy, where leaders intend pupils to learn about mutual respect and tolerance. The school has set out how pupils will learn about other fundamental British values, such as democracy, for example through voting.

- The information that the school intends to share with pupils that prepares them for life in modern Britain, for example through the programme of assemblies, is presented in an impartial way. This information includes references to all of the protected characteristics.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a)-7(b)

- The proprietor and other leaders have the relevant safeguarding knowledge that they need to ensure that pupils are reliably kept safe. The safeguarding policy reflects the latest guidance and is published on the school's website. Systems and procedures have been set up to keep pupils safe, such as a comprehensive induction programme for new staff and a staff code of conduct.
- The headteacher is a designated safeguarding lead and there are other highly trained staff who together make up the safeguarding team.

Paragraph 9, 9(a)-9(c), 10

- There is a suitable behaviour policy in place, as well as an anti-bullying policy. These policies set out with clarity the school's approach to dealing with poor behaviour and how any incidents will be recorded. Leaders have systems in place to record all aspects of pupils' development, including their emotional development. This will help leaders to build a full picture of each pupil's progress and identify any difficulties that they may have. There are clear plans for how this information will be communicated to parents.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 13, 16, 16(a)-16(b)

- The proprietor has put a suitable health and safety policy in place. This ensures the school's compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Leaders intend to use a specialist contractor to check fire-fighting equipment and emergency systems and provide ongoing advice and guidance. The school plans to carry out regular fire drills.
- The proprietor has put a suitable first-aid policy in place. There will be an appropriate number of staff with first-aid qualifications. Staff who are already working at the school hold appropriate first-aid qualifications.
- The proprietor ensures that staff identify and monitor risks through the written risk assessment policy. Samples of risk assessments show that leaders give due care and attention to the identification and consideration of risks. Some pupils will have their own risk assessments based on an evaluation of their needs and safety.

Paragraph 14

- There will be a suitable number of staff deployed to supervise pupils on the school site. This includes at the start and the end of the school day, and during social times.

Paragraph 15

- The school has established appropriate systems to register pupils' attendance and to monitor any absence effectively. The headteacher will provide regular attendance reports to the proprietor.
- There is a suitable admissions policy in place. This includes the information that leaders will collect when admitting a pupil, as set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a)–(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a)–(d), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a)–(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a)–(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- An electronic single central record is in place. This enables leaders to record the essential checks made during recruitment. Leaders have a secure understanding of all of the required checks that must be carried out on new staff, supply staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the proprietor body. These checks are completed before staff begin working at the school.
- Leaders understand their responsibility to seek the necessary assurances relating to overseas background checks. The single central record has been set up to record these checks should they be required.
- The school has ensured that staff already employed have completed relevant safeguarding training, including safer recruitment. There is a comprehensive induction package in place to ensure that newly appointed staff gain the knowledge of safeguarding that they need to keep pupils safe.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- The proposed school is set in a two-storey, former nursery building. The clean and well-maintained accommodation includes several teaching spaces, a communal area, a medical room, office spaces and changing facilities. The main reception is accessible via a secure entrance at the front of the school. The proprietor has ensured that there are safe spaces for pupils to be dropped off and collected. The windows are fitted with restrictors.

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(a)–(c), 28(1), 28(1)(a)–(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a)–(b)

- There are suitable toilet and washing facilities. All toilets can be locked from the inside. Drinking water is clearly labelled and hot water is set at a safe temperature. Pupils will have access to drinking water during the school day. There are suitable facilities for pupils to shower and get changed before and after physical education (PE) lessons.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a)–(c)

- There is a medical room that is located near to a toilet. The room contains a first-aid kit as well as lockable storage for medication.

Paragraphs 26, 27, 27(a)–(b)

- The classrooms are well lit. They have suitable acoustics.

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a)–(b)

- There is a large outdoor area that provides enough space for pupils to play and socialise. This can also be used for pupils to take part in PE lessons.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)-32(1)(k), 32(2)-32(2)(d), 32(3)-32(3)(g)

- The website for the proposed school provides parents with the relevant policies that they need. It also contains contact details for the headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body. The website enables parents to easily access a wealth of information about the school.
- The school intends to provide parents with termly updates on pupils' progress, attainment and emotional well-being. Leaders are aware of the need to publish inspection reports and examination results on the school website once they are released.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)-33(k)

- The school's complaints policy contains information about the stages within the complaints process, including how parents can raise concerns informally. The policy sets out appropriate timescales and how records of complaints will be stored.
- A copy of the complaints policy is available on the school website.
- The standard in this part is likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- At the first pre-registration inspection, this standard was judged not likely to be met. Since then, the proprietor has ensured that staff have an appropriate knowledge of the standards. It has set out how it will make regular checks to ensure ongoing compliance with the standards.
- Leaders at all levels have the knowledge and expertise that they need to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education. They are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to promote the well-being of pupils.
- As a result of the proprietor's actions since the previous pre-registration inspection, the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have written a suitable accessibility plan.
- The school is likely to meet the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	150682
DfE registration number	357/6008
Inspection number	10334431

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special school
School status	Independent day school
Proprietor	First Steps Together Limited
Chair	Matthew Bonilla
Headteacher	Natalie Ogden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£42,000 to £70,000
Telephone number	0330 118 0974
Website	https://www.firststepstogether.online/
Email address	n.ogden@firststepstogether.uk

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	Not applicable	11–14	11–14
Number of pupils on the school roll	Not applicable	32	32

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Not applicable	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	Not applicable	32
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	Not applicable	32
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	32
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	Not applicable	32

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	6
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0
Number of staff in the welfare provision	0	7

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed independent school is located in Manchester. It is housed in a large, double-storey repurposed former nursery. The proposed school is located at Stockport Road, Hyde SK14 3QF.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 32 pupils, irrespective of gender, aged between 11 and 16 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils who struggle to cope with mainstream education by providing them with a smaller, nurturing environment.
- Leaders anticipate that all pupils will have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The proprietor is First Steps Together Limited. The proprietor body is made up of two directors. These directors intend to have oversight and governance responsibilities for the proposed school should it open. A headteacher and two deputy headteachers have been appointed and are in post.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine whether the school is likely to meet the standards should the DfE decide to register the proposed school.
- This was the second pre-registration inspection. The first pre-registration inspection was carried out on 19 October 2023.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body, who is also the chair of governors.
- The inspector made a tour of the school site, both internally and externally, to check the suitability and safety of the premises.
- The inspector scrutinised and evaluated a wide range of documents provided by the school, including safeguarding information, statutory policies and the proposed school curriculum.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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