

The Watkin Centre

14 Royle Green Road, Northenden, Manchester M22 4NG

Inspection date

14 March 2024

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards. It is currently operating without registration

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2, 2(1)–2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a)–2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor has prepared an appropriate curriculum policy. The policy emphasises the contribution that each subject will make to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. The information within the policy also shows that the active promotion of fundamental British values is at the core of leaders' work. This includes values such as tolerance and respect, together with the development of pupils' knowledge and an understanding of being a British citizen.
- The curriculum policy is supported by schemes of work for each subject. The schemes of work and examples of curriculum design are appropriate. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn during their time at the school. Leaders' curriculum design considers the specific and individual needs of pupils, all of whom will be pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There is suitable importance placed on speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics in the curriculum. Additionally, there will be an emphasis on pupils studying subjects such as science, information and communication technology, religious education, history and geography. Subjects will also include art and design and physical education (PE).
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education will be taught through timetabled lessons. Aspects of PSHE education will also be woven into the whole school curriculum, including careers education. The development of pupils' life skills and also their emotional and well-being skills is considered an essential part of the curriculum by leaders. The topics to be covered are suitably wide-ranging and include all of those that pay particular regard to the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

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

- The PSHE education curriculum will include the development of pupils' understanding of relationships, sex and health education. Leaders have taken into consideration the relevant statutory guidance. They have drafted a policy statement, and they have

considered how they will consult with parents and carers about the policy. Leaders are aware that this statement will need to be placed on the school's website.

Paragraph 3, 3(a)–3(j)

- The proprietor has already recruited some staff. The school is in the process of recruiting other staff. It has a clear idea of the calibre and expertise that they are looking for in new teachers and other staff.
- Templates have been created for short-term curriculum design. Leaders will ask teachers to include the content of lessons in these templates should the school be approved to open. Teachers will be expected to consider the needs of the pupils when designing lesson activities. The school is well resourced with a range of appropriate educational books and equipment. These are relevant to the age range of pupils whom the school proposes to serve.
- The proprietor is committed to providing a good-quality education for pupils. The headteacher and other senior leaders already appointed have sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to guide and support teachers. This should enable teachers to provide a suitable quality of education if the school opens.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders have a suitable assessment policy in place.
- Leaders will assess pupils' attainment and personal needs when they start at the school. Pupils' progress and attainment will be assessed regularly. Pupils' progress will be communicated regularly with parents and those responsible for governance. Teachers will use these assessments to inform their teaching.
- Where appropriate, pupils will complete national end-of-key-stage assessments.
- All of the independent school 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(b)–5(b)(vii), 5(c), 5(d)–5(d)(iii)

- Documentary evidence indicates that pupils' SMSC development is a thread that runs throughout the curriculum for the proposed provision. Pupils' SMSC development is central to the school's aims, policies and plans for enrichment activities.
- Aspects of SMSC development are threaded through the PSHE scheme of work, showing that pupils will learn about democracy and different faiths. Enrichment activities will be offered to all pupils to ensure that they experience a diverse range of social and cultural activities and traditions. For example, plans are in place to help pupils to be involved in charity work and local community events.
- Leaders have plans to provide an opportunity for pupils to discuss local and national issues in an impartial way. Pupils will be encouraged to put into practice the values that are fundamental to living in modern Britain.
- The school's policies include appropriate references to all the protected characteristics set out in legislation.

- The independent school 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 has paid attention to the current statutory guidance for safeguarding pupils. A suitable and up-to-date safeguarding policy is in place. Leaders have introduced all the necessary arrangements to keep pupils safe and to promote their welfare at the school.
- The headteacher and two other senior members of staff are already appointed as designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs). It is likely that other senior staff will also be trained at DSL level. All new staff will receive appropriate induction training, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, sexual exploitation, sexting and e-safety.

Paragraphs 9, 9(a)–9(c), 10

- The proprietor has detailed and suitable behaviour and exclusion policies in place. There is also an appropriate anti-bullying policy. Any incidents of poor behaviour will be recorded. Leaders intend to cross-reference these with any other concerns so that they can gain a full picture of an individual pupil's behaviour and respond quickly to any additional needs that arise. The policy includes appropriate and proportionate consequences.

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

- The proprietor has a health and safety policy that is tailored to the premises of the proposed school. It complies with all relevant laws. Regular fire safety checks of the premises are planned. The proprietor will ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- The proprietor has an appropriate first-aid policy in place. A number of staff already appointed have undergone first-aid training.
- A written risk assessment policy is in place. The risk assessments that have already been completed show that leaders plan to take appropriate actions to minimise risks to pupils. This includes risk assessments for the school building, for staff, for events and individual pupils.
- Leaders have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that the school's computer network has appropriate monitoring and filtering in place. This is to assure pupils' safety when they are working online.

Paragraph 14

- Pupils will always be appropriately supervised, including at breaktimes, when arriving at school and on leaving the school premises.

Paragraph 15

- Leaders have appropriate systems in place to register pupils' attendance and to allow them to monitor pupils' absences effectively. Leaders will report on attendance on a regular basis through the governance arrangements at the school.

- The proprietor has published a suitable admissions policy for the school. Systems are in place to ensure that records of admissions will adhere to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- All of the independent school 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), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)–18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa)–19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b)–19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6), 20(6)(a)–20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i)–20(6)(b)(iii), 20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i)–21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7)–21(7)(b)

- The single central record (SCR) is in place and meets the requirements for the information it must contain. Leaders understand the need to complete all the required checks on the suitability of staff before they take up an appointment.
- Records relating to the proprietor body are included on the school's SCR. All of the suitability checks, including those relating to the leadership and management of a school, have also been carried out.
- The proprietor, headteacher and leader for human resources have completed appropriate training to support the appointment of suitable staff to work in a school. Some teaching staff have already been appointed. Plans to recruit additional teachers and support staff are in place. The induction documentation for new staff makes it clear that they will undergo a full suite of safeguarding, and other appropriate training, on appointment.
- Leaders are aware of the procedures that they should follow in the event of employing agency staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils.
- Leaders do not intend to engage volunteers. However, they are clear about their responsibility for checking the suitability of volunteers who may work with pupils if this does occur.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

- The proposed school is housed in a large townhouse that was formerly used as a private nursery. The good-sized building has been refurbished by the proprietor to a high standard. The accommodation comprises several teaching rooms, a communal space, an art room, a science room, a kitchen, a medical room, a reception area and a suite of offices.
- There are appropriate toilet facilities. All toilets can be secured from the inside. There is running hot and cold water. The hot water is set at an appropriate temperature. There are signs indicating that the water is not suitable for drinking. Pupils will have access to drinking water throughout the day.

- There are appropriate changing and shower facilities for boys and girls on the proposed school site. These are clean and furnished to a high standard.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- A medical room has been set aside with suitable washing facilities in the room. There is easy access to a toilet. A bed and first-aid kit were in the medical room at the time of the inspection.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b)

- The accommodation throughout is of an appropriate standard and it meets all requirements for the health, safety and welfare of pupils. This includes suitable acoustics and lighting. Teaching rooms have a suitable source of natural light. The exterior and interior lighting is of an appropriate standard. Access through main doorways and gates will be via keypads and coded locks.

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The proposed pupils will have access to an outdoor area that is safe. It will be an appropriate space in which pupils can play when not in lessons and for them to engage in PE activities. PE activities will be regularly timetabled in accordance with the school's curriculum requirements. Some of these sessions may be conducted at a local sports centre. Leaders will have risk assessments in place to ensure pupils' safety when travelling to and from the sports centre, and when using this site.
- All of the independent school 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 proprietor has set up a school website that contains all of the required information. The proprietor is fully aware of the requirements that a school should publish on its website.
- There is a suitable range of information available for parents and pupils when they join the school. A comprehensive range of policies for parents is in place, including information on admissions, behaviour, the curriculum and safeguarding. All documents will be made available for parents on request from the school office, as well as being available on the school's website.
- Leaders intend to provide termly and annual reports on pupils' progress and attainment to parents. Reports will be detailed and provide a holistic picture of a pupil's progress. They will also report on pupils' personal development and emotional health and well-being. Leaders are aware that any inspection reports and examination results need to be made available once released.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a)–33(k)

- The complaints policy is appropriate. It outlines all of the required stages. It includes appropriate timescales and information about the storage and sharing of written records. The policy is detailed and it ensures transparency of the school's intended complaints procedures.
- All of the independent school standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has an appropriate understanding of the standards. The proprietor has plans in place to monitor compliance with the standards regularly.
- Leaders demonstrate the knowledge required to set up and run this independent school successfully. They have experience of, and a commitment to, providing an effective quality of education for pupils. They are likely to fulfil their responsibilities to promote the well-being of pupils.
- All of the standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed school opens.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan fully reflects statutory requirements.

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	150525
DfE registration number	352/6034
Inspection number	10331621

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 special school
Proprietor	First Steps Together Ltd
Chair	Matthew Bonilla
Headteacher	Natalie Ogden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,000 to £69,000
Telephone number	03301 180 974
Website	www.firststepstogether.uk
Email address	n.ogden@firststepstogether.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	14
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	None
Total hours operating as a school per week	16
Total hours of teaching provided per week	16

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 14	11 to 14	11 to 14
Number of pupils on the school roll	14	36	36

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	None	36
Number of part-time pupils	14	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	14	36
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	None	36
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	None	Not known

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	7	8
Number of part-time teaching staff	None	None
Number of staff in the welfare provision	5	7

Information about this proposed school

- This proposed independent school is located in Manchester. It is housed in a large, repurposed former nursery. The proposed school is located at 14 Royle Green Road, Northenden, Manchester M22 4NG.
- It is proposed that the school will provide full-time education for up to 36 pupils irrespective of gender aged between 11 and 14 years. It is intended that the proposed school will cater for pupils who are struggling to cope with mainstream education by providing them with a smaller, nurturing environment. Leaders intend to offer pupils pathways to achieve academically and ultimately gain future employment. Referrals will be taken initially from Manchester City Council.
- The proprietor has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to register two other schools separately. The first is the Kershaw Wood School, Talbot Street, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 7DG. The second is Peak Forest School, Stockport Road, Hyde SK14 3QF.
- Leaders aim to re-engage pupils who are not suited to, or who are struggling with, traditional education pathways. They aim to do this by engaging pupils in personalised educational and vocational courses. Leaders anticipate that all pupils will have an education, health and care (EHC) plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The proprietor has a limited company called First Steps Together Limited. The proprietor body is made up of two directors. They intend to have oversight and governance responsibilities for the school when it opens. A headteacher has already been appointed and is in post.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was running as an unregistered school provision for 14 pupils. This arrangement has been negotiated with Manchester City Council. All pupils attend part time, below 16 hours per week, and none have an EHC plan.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards prior to opening as a registered school.
- This was the school's second pre-registration inspection.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, who is also one of three DSLs. She held discussions with members of the teaching and curriculum teams.
- The inspector met the proprietor representative who is also the chair of governors for the school. She also spoke to the leader for human resources and the leader for health, safety and compliance, both of whom have oversight for the three schools within the company.
- The inspector made a tour of the school to check the suitability of the proposed premises against the relevant independent school standards. She also looked at a wide range of documents and policies, including those relating to the curriculum, behaviour and health and safety. She also checked documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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