The Watkin Centre

14 Royle Green Road, Northenden, Manchester M22 4NG

Inspection date	10 June 2025
Overall outcome	**The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented**

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor has followed current statutory guidance in the development of its arrangements to keep pupils safe. There is a suitable and up-to-date safeguarding policy in place. The proprietor has ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents and carers via the school's website. This policy is likely to remain suitable should the proposed material changes be granted.
- The proprietor has ensured that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. Those with responsibilities for leading safeguarding have been trained to the required level.
- All new staff receive an appropriate induction programme, safeguarding training and regular updates on areas such as radicalisation and extremism, and online safety.

Paragraph 11

- There is a suitable and up-to-date health and safety policy in place. This policy is likely to remain suitable should the proposed material changes be granted.

Paragraph 12

- The proprietor has ensured that the school complies with the necessary fire-safety regulations. The effective practice that the school has established on the current school site is set to be replicated on the proposed new site. The policies and procedures relevant to fire safety are likely to remain suitable should the proposed material changes be granted.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor has ensured that a suitable number of qualified staff have been appointed so that pupils would be properly supervised should the proposed material changes be granted.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The proprietor has prioritised the welfare of pupils. It has ensured that the school has taken the necessary steps to reduce risks. For example, the school has drawn up an

appropriate risk assessment policy. This includes risk assessments for the new school site and off-site visits.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

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

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a)-18(2)(e), 18(3)

- The proprietor makes the necessary checks on staff prior to their appointment to the school.
- The proprietor has a detailed understanding of the standards in relation to the suitability of staff. It has ensured that all necessary checks are made on staff prior to their employment at the school.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Paragraphs 19(2), 19(2)(a)-19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

- The proprietor does not make use of supply staff. However, it is aware of the checks that are required prior to the employment of supply staff at the school.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Paragraphs 20(6), 20(6)(a)-20(6)(c)

- The proprietor makes the necessary checks on members of the proprietor body prior to their appointment to this role. This includes those checks required under section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Paragraphs 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a)-21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a)-21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(c), 21(6)

- The proprietor keeps an up-to-date record of the employment checks that it makes on staff and members of the proprietor body. This is stored electronically and it can be reproduced in a legible form if required.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1) to 23(2), 28(1) to 28(2b)

- The proposed school premises is entirely suitable for use by pupils and staff. The premises is currently under construction and will benefit from a stringent cleaning and maintenance regime. The premises does not pose a risk to the health of staff and pupils.

- There are modern, suitable toilets and washing facilities.
- Changing rooms and showering facilities are new and wholly appropriate for pupils aged 11 years and over.
- Drinking-water is readily available to pupils at all times and plans show that this will be clearly marked as suitable for drinking.
- The proprietor has systems in place to check that the temperature of hot water is suitable and does not pose a scalding risk to users.
- At the time of this inspection, the building intended to accommodate pupils at the new site is unfinished and due for completion ready for use from 1 September 2025. However, the detailed plans show that careful consideration has been given to the design of the building to ensure that it is suitable for the range of needs of the pupils.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

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

- Medical facilities are modern and suitable for pupils. The school's policies show that these facilities will be equipped with fully stocked first-aid boxes, along with eye wash equipment and materials for the management of biohazards.
- The proprietor has ensured that the medical room is readily available for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. Washing and toilet facilities are nearby.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Paragraph 25

- The proprietor has a comprehensive understanding of the standards in relation to premises and accommodation. It has ensured that the new building provides pristine and modern accommodation that is finished to a high standard. The new premises are wholly appropriate for 110 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years should the material changes be granted.

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

- Classrooms and other spaces used for the delivery of the curriculum have suitable acoustic conditions and sound insulation. In the design of the new accommodation, the proprietor has secured specialist advice to ensure that classrooms are suitable for the teaching of the curriculum and the provision of specialist support to meet the needs of pupils.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The proprietor has ensured that there is suitable outdoor space for pupils to take part in physical education, in line with the school's curriculum.
- During social times, well-designed and safe spaces are available for pupils to play outside.

- The standards in this part are likely to be met should the material changes be granted.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) to34(1)(c)

- The proprietor has an appropriate knowledge of the standards. It holds the school to account effectively for its work. For example, it has appointed an experienced quality assurance lead who has oversight of health and safety matters, both at the current premises and at the proposed school site. This helps to ensure that the standards are met consistently well.
- The proprietor, and leaders at all levels, have planned carefully for the proposed changes to the school's accommodation and to the number of pupils that the school will admit. For example, they have appointed suitable staff and designed a specialist facility to accommodate up to 110 pupils aged between 11 to 16 years. In addition, they have designed an enhanced transition programme so that pupils and staff can make a successful move to the proposed new school building.
- The proprietor has ensured that all standards checked during this inspection are likely to be met if the proposed changes are granted.
- The standards in this part are likely to be met if the proposed material changes are granted.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has an appropriate accessibility policy in place which ensures that schedule 10 of the Equalities Act 2021 is likely to be met.

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 that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	150525
DfE registration number	352/6034
Inspection number	10408406

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent day school
Proprietor	First Steps Together Ltd
Chair	Matthew Bonilla
Headteacher	Natalie Ogden
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,000 - £69,000
Telephone number	03301180974
Website	www.firststepstogether.uk
Email address	Admin@firststepstogether.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	10 to 12 December 2024

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16	11 to 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	30	110	110

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Mixed

Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	30	110
Number of part-time pupils	0	0
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	30	110
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	30	110
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	30	110

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	12	29
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

Information about this school

- The school operates from premises at 14 Royle Green Road, Northenden, Manchester M22 4NG where it provides education for children aged 11 to 16 years.
- The school plans to move to new, purpose-built premises at Mulberry House, Claverton Rd, Wythenshawe, Manchester M23 9TT from 1 September 2025.
- The school provides full-time education for up to 36 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years. The school caters for pupils who are struggling to cope with mainstream education by providing them with a smaller, nurturing environment. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) because the proprietor requested a change to the number of pupils that the school admits and a change to the address of the school.
- This was the first material change since the standard inspection. At the last standard inspection in December 2024, the school requested a change of age range from 11 to 14 years to 11 to 16 years. The DfE approved this request in January 2025.
- The inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body, the chair of the local governing board, the headteacher, and other leaders. The inspector scrutinised a range of policies and documents relating to the standards.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from a local authority with a child placed at the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector carried out a tour of the school and spoke to some pupils.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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