

Safe Start School

1, 2, 4 & 5 Henry Square Chambers, Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside OL6 7ST

Inspection date

15 October 2025

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 3, 3(c), 3(e)

- At the time of the standard inspection in January 2025, inspectors found the school's work to develop the curriculum was very recent. In many subjects, the school had not thought clearly enough about what pupils should know and remember. Inspectors identified that the school did not use assessment strategies well enough to shape teaching around pupils' misconceptions. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning persisted.
- In the school's subsequent action plan, the inspector found that the school's intended actions did not give enough clarity about how its intended actions would bring about the required improvement. For example, it was not clear how the curriculum leader would support the important knowledge being identified in the curriculum. There were also no measurable success criteria for the school to measure the impact of these actions.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, the school has redesigned its curriculum offer to pupils. Through its evaluation, the school has now identified the important knowledge it wants pupils to learn while taking into consideration pupils' individual starting points. Across many subjects, this is now sequenced more clearly so that pupils encounter new learning in a more logical order.
- However, the school's curriculum is not implemented as effectively as it should be. In some instances, teachers still do not use their assessment information carefully enough to identify gaps in pupils' understanding or to check whether pupils have retained prior learning. This means that sometimes the work that teachers provide to pupils is not as closely matched to their next steps as it could be.
- In other instances, staff's subject knowledge is not secure enough to implement the curriculum effectively. Although the school has provided some initial professional development for staff on the new curriculum, it has not pinpointed with enough accuracy where further professional development is required. On occasion, this means that teachers do not choose the most effective teaching methods or activities for pupils.

Paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(b)

- At the last standard inspection, inspectors found that the school's support for pupils to catch up in reading was underdeveloped. Some pupils who found reading difficult did not get the support that they needed.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, in response to the weaknesses previously identified, the school has introduced a new approach to supporting pupils' reading ability. This includes identifying gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge and giving pupils opportunities to keep practising sounds they do not understand. In some instances, this is helping pupils to become more confident readers. However, this approach is being implemented inconsistently and, in some instances, does not identify with enough precision the gaps that remain in pupils' phonics knowledge. In addition, pupils are not routinely using their phonics knowledge to help them spell common words with enough accuracy. This is hindering some pupils from developing and acquiring secure literacy skills.

Paragraph 3, 3(d)

- At the last standard inspection, inspectors found that staff did not use the information they had about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively enough to adapt their teaching.
- In the school's action plan, the inspector found that the school had not given enough clarity about how staff's professional development would positively influence how the curriculum was taught. The school indicated that the curriculum leader would quality assure this aspect of the school's provision but gave no details about how this would be implemented or what the focus would be.
- Overall, this progress monitoring inspection identified that the intended curriculum now takes pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment into consideration. However, staff's confidence remains low in how they can make adaptations to their teaching of the curriculum which support pupils to access the intended curriculum. This means that some of those adaptations do not have the required impact that the school and teachers want. In some instances, some pupils struggle to access the curriculum.
- These independent school standards (the standards) continue to be unmet.

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2)(h), 3, 3(a), 3(f)

- The school has ensured that it has paid due regard to pupils' age, stage and their aptitudes. In designing its curriculum, the school has ensured that the most important knowledge is identified.
- While the school's curriculum is not implemented as consistently as it could be, this does not prevent pupils being presented with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills.
- In selecting schemes of work to support the implementation of the curriculum, the school ensures that the resources used are high-quality resources from the published scheme. No substandard resources were seen during the inspection.
- These standards continue to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Part 6. Provision of information

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

- At the standard inspection in January 2025, inspectors found that the school's policies, including the safeguarding policy, met the current statutory requirements. These were made available to parents and carers on the school's website.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, inspectors found that this was still the case. Furthermore, there are robust systems in place for identifying, recording and reporting any safeguarding concerns that staff may have. The school makes regular safeguarding training available for all staff. This helps staff to remain vigilant to any issues that may arise. Senior staff have had appropriate training to ensure that they can carry out their role successfully.
- These standards continue to be met.

Paragraphs 11, 14, 15

- The school ensures that the written health and safety policy is implemented effectively.
- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site unsupervised. When pupils leave the site unexpectedly, the school take appropriate steps to ensure that the pupil remains safe. No pupil was observed leaving the site unexpectedly and pupils report that this happens very rarely.
- Although the school has had a high turnover of staff, this has now settled. Pupils and staff have warm, caring relationships. Pupils are greeted positively when they arrive at school in the morning.
- Pupils are adequately supervised throughout the day. Very often, pupils are accompanied as they move around the school. When pupils have their breaks, they are supervised by school staff.
- Although some pupils' attendance is low, the school is taking appropriate action to improve this. When pupils are absent from school, the school has effective systems in place to ensure that they are safe. This includes regularly checking on pupils' location. Some pupils access their satellite provision. In these instances, the school also ensures that appropriate safeguarding checks are made.
- Pupils' attendance at school is appropriately recorded. The school has ensured that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- These standards continue to be met.

Paragraph 12

- At the standard inspection in January 2025, inspectors found that the school's approach to fire safety lacked rigour. Some of the school's fire risk assessments were not up to date. The risk assessments did not reflect the current premises which the school used for its pupils.
- In the school's action plan, the school indicated that a fire-safety risk assessment had been completed by a competent professional.

- At this progress monitoring inspection, the school has improved its approach to fire risk assessments. A well-defined fire risk assessment is in place. Appropriate checks are made on fire-fighting equipment. The school ensures that regular fire drills are carried out to confirm that staff and pupils can leave the school safely in the event of a fire. There are enough staff who have undertaken correct fire safety training.
- This previously unmet standard is now met.

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

- The school's single central register contains all the required information required by law. This includes appropriate checks on staff, visitors and members of the governing body. All safer recruitment procedures are followed when new staff join the school.
- The standards in this part continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- At the standard inspection in January 2025, inspectors found that the general premises and accommodation did not ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare. They found that routine maintenance issues were not addressed in a timely way.
- In the school's submitted action plan, inspectors found that there was a lack of detail about how often the school would carry out checks on the premises.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, inspectors found that the premises were well maintained to a high standard. All furnishings and decor were in an excellent state. Staff and pupils could move around the building without encountering any risks. Classrooms, corridors and communal areas were well lit. Where needed, windows have limiters on them. Pupils sensibly move around the building, which includes many stairs.
- When pupils use the basement area of the school for recreation or physical activities, the environment is suitable and spacious. It is a bright, welcoming area for pupils to use. Like other areas of the school, the area does not pose a health and safety risk to pupils or staff.
- The school site is secure. There are appropriate locks on internal doors which prevent pupils leaving the school site easily. Pupils are often escorted as they move around the building.
- Regular checks are made on the building and all equipment used within the school. For example, regular tests are made on electrical equipment. Where issues are identified, these are now remedied in a timely manner.
- This previously unmet standard is now met.

Paragraphs 23(1)(c), 27 to 27(b), 29(1) to 29(1)(b)

- There are suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils to use following physical activity.
- As with all areas of the school building and externally, the basement area of the school has adequate lighting. It has suitable lighting for a variety of purposes, including any physical activity.

- The outdoor space at the school is large and suitable for pupils. It provides pupils with enough space so that they can play outside. It is suitable for any physical activity that is provided as part of the school's curriculum.
- These standards continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34, 34(1)(a), 34 (1)(b)

- At the time of the last standard inspection, inspectors found that the standards had not been consistently met. As such, the proprietor could not demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to fulfil its responsibilities.
- In the school's submitted action plan, inspectors found that the school was intending to introduce a quality assurance plan. However, there was no detail to determine how this would impact positively on ensuring that the standards are met securely and consistently over time. There was no information about how the new governing body would positively impact this.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, the school has started to make the necessary improvements towards ensuring that the standards are more consistently met. In some instances, the school has been successful. For example, some of the unmet standards identified at the previous inspection are now met. This means that the school has improved its knowledge of how these standards are met.
- Although the school has begun to improve the quality of education that pupils receive, this is still in its relative infancy. The school has created a new leadership structure to help it support meeting the standards more consistently. There are more systems in place to ensure that the school can accurately assess the impact of its actions. This includes keeping the proprietor informed of its current provision. However, this structure is new, and the impact of these actions is not borne out in pupils' learning and achievement.
- The school has established a governing body. It has recruited members to the governing body with the correct skillset to support and challenge the school. However, this work is still in its infancy. Alongside other recent leadership changes, there is not enough evidence of how this has impacted positively on pupils' achievement or the school's ability to consistently meet the standards over time.
- These standards continue to be unmet.

Paragraph 34(1)(c)

- The school continues to promote effectively pupils' well-being. It takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Positive relationships exist between pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe in school, and they know who they would turn to for support. The previously unmet standard regarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is now met.
- This standard continues to be met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	147859
DfE registration number	357/6007
Inspection number	10414362

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Proprietor	Safe Start School Ltd
Chair	Rachel Pilling
Headteacher	Kate Collins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£34,200 to £48,000
Telephone number	0161 523 5444
Website	www.safestarttameside.com
Email address	admin@safestartschooltameside.com
Date of previous standard inspection	14 to 16 January 2025

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are placed at the school by their local authorities.
- The school operates from three separate units within the same premises. These are numbers 1–2, number 4 and number 5 at Henry Square Chambers, Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside OL6 7ST.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 14 to 16 January 2025.
- The majority of the school's staff have been appointed since the last inspection.

- The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school is registered to admit up to 38 pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since the school's standard inspection in January 2025. The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to submit an action plan following the previous inspection to illustrate how it would meet the unmet standards identified at its previous standard inspection. This action plan was evaluated in April 2025 and was rejected by the DfE.
- This inspection was conducted with no notice.
- Inspectors visited a variety of lessons. When in lessons, they looked at pupils' books and spoke with them about their learning.
- The inspectors made a tour of the premises.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair of the proprietor body, chair of the governing body and the headteacher. Inspectors also made contact with the local authority designated officer.
- The DfE asked inspectors to consider some previously met standards as part of this inspection. This included some standards in part 1, part 3, part 4, part 5 and part 8.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mavis Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

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