

School inspection report

2 to 4 December 2025

Forest School

Moss Lane
Timperley
Altrincham
WA15 6LJ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are committed to the wellbeing of pupils. The school's 'Forest way' provides a vehicle through which careful attention is given to pupils' emotional, physical and mental health. Leaders' approaches successfully create positive interactions and a harmonious community. As a result, pupils are self-confident and self-aware.
2. Leaders take effective action to identify and mitigate risk. A regular rhythm of leadership meetings, half-termly health and safety committees and a robust approach to record-keeping supports leaders to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to risk management.
3. Leaders have developed secure systems to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This begins with a focused identification process which is appropriately supported by well-integrated and timely assessments. Teachers are well informed about pupils' precise needs and support pupils in lessons to access the curriculum and learn effectively.
4. There is some inconsistency around the quality of teachers' guidance and feedback to pupils to support their next steps in their learning. Typically, the guidance and feedback that pupils receive provides praise but does always not give precise, subject-specific advice about how best to improve their understanding and work. This means that opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' learning.
5. Health and safety arrangements are robust. Suitable attention is paid to aspects such as fire prevention and the administration of first aid. The arrangements are supported by comprehensive records. These actions support the safety and welfare of pupils.
6. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive scheme of work for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is in place. From the early years to Year 6, the curriculum focuses on, and revisits, important themes and topics. This enables pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding in an age-appropriate way.
7. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on roles and responsibilities within the school. Older pupils pair up with younger members of the school to support them. This includes as reading and playtime buddies. Older pupils act as positive role models and in turn they learn about qualities such as kindness and patience.
8. Leaders place importance on supporting the local community. Pupils are involved in a range of initiatives that broaden their experiences and understanding. They develop a sense of social responsibility and this helps prepare them well for their future lives.
9. Leaders actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion. This is achieved through units within the PSHE scheme of work and through constantly reminding pupils about the importance of treating everyone with respect. Pupils challenge discrimination whenever it arises.
10. Appropriate safeguarding processes are well embedded, including those related to pre-employment checks and recruitment.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- improve the quality of teachers' subject-specific guidance and feedback in all curriculum areas so that pupils know how to strengthen their understanding, develop their knowledge and improve their work.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders use their knowledge and skills to actively promote the school's aims and ethos. Through specific initiatives, they create a supportive environment where members of the school feel valued. For example, the 'Forest way', focuses on how pupils need to think carefully about how they can positively contribute to the life of the school. This initiative is woven into many aspects of school life.
12. Directors of the proprietor body visit the school regularly to carry out focused reviews of the effectiveness of leaders' work. This provides appropriate support and challenge and ensures that the school's procedures support the wellbeing of pupils. The proprietor body ensures that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently.
13. Leaders in the early years are well equipped to carry out their roles. They have appropriate knowledge and expertise. This supports early childhood development and learning, including for the youngest children who are two years old. Leaders liaise effectively with teachers and practitioners. This ensures that expectations are consistently applied. For example, supporting the needs of the children when feeding, sleeping or toileting.
14. Leaders focus carefully on self-evaluation. In their decision-making, leaders assess the impact of their ideas on the wellbeing of pupils. For example, the decision to increase the focus on outdoor activities and animal care was weighed up against the potential loss of some outdoor play spaces. Any decisions are regularly reviewed to assess their impact on pupils. Parents and pupils are asked to contribute their thoughts and ideas. These are considered carefully by leaders.
15. Leaders understand the importance of risk management. For example, leaders in the early years carry out daily risk assessments of both the indoor and outside areas. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all trips and visits including those that involve overnight stays. Leaders identify risks and then put in place suitable mitigation arrangements, including those relating to individual pupils, aspects such as curriculum or policy changes. As a result, leaders ensure pupils' health needs are met and their physical and emotional wellbeing is actively promoted.
16. Leaders establish effective links with other agencies. These include links with safeguarding partners such as the police and the local children's services. Additionally, pupils receive support from medical agencies such as occupational therapists, speech therapists and physiotherapists. These links promote and benefit the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders ensure that the local authority is informed when any pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
17. Leaders prioritise equality, inclusion and diversity. They promote a culture where everyone is valued. This ensures that the school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place. This ensures suitable arrangements are made to access the school buildings, as required. Leaders focus appropriately on how all aspects of the curriculum and other information can be accessed by everyone. This includes additions such as ramps, non-slip mats, handrails and support in physical education (PE) activities, as required.
18. Leaders manage policy review and implementation thoroughly. Leaders ensure that appropriate information is made available to parents and others. This is generally through the detailed school website. This includes, for example, policies on behaviour, bullying, first aid and health and safety. Leaders ensure that parents are provided with regular reports on their child's achievement.

19. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy. It allows for parents to raise complaints at an informal level, a formal level and through a panel hearing. Informal concerns are monitored carefully to detect any themes that might need further investigation. Leaders deal with complaints within the published timescales.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have developed a curriculum that focuses on academic progress and preparation for readiness for secondary school, as well as providing a range of opportunities and breadth of experience. Leaders have thought carefully about how the curriculum builds over time, through progression documents, so that it plans precisely for the development and extension of pupils' skills and knowledge. The curriculum actively promotes fundamental British values through different subjects. Additionally, the curriculum is supplemented by a range of activities, including extra-curricular activities. These include cookery, musical drama and hockey.
22. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the subjects that they teach. They know pupils well and use this understanding to plan lessons carefully. Teachers make creative use of resources, such as archaeological artefacts in history and repurposed materials in science to represent body parts. They use a range of ways to help pupils to regulate their timekeeping and behaviour when learning, for example using egg timers. Teachers promote the values of respect and tolerance. There are well embedded and positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils typically learn well in lessons.
23. Teachers in the early years support the learning and development of the youngest children. Through high quality interactions, teachers help children to develop their language and communication, including through speaking publicly in assemblies and performances. There is a well-embedded approach to early reading, mark making and writing skills. Staff also support children to develop their understanding of early number, shape and space. Examples of this include matching numbers to the types of dinosaurs and understanding shape and money through play activities. As a result, children are well prepared to move onto Year 1 by the end of the Reception year.
24. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils who have SEND are effectively identified and met. Leaders provide teachers and teaching assistants with precise information about the needs of pupils and the strategies that will best support them, such as in-class support and, occasionally, additional specialist support. Leaders and teachers monitor carefully how well pupils are faring. This helps teachers and leaders to plan how they will adapt their teaching to support pupils to access the curriculum. As a result, pupils who have SEND are well supported and learn effectively alongside their peers.
25. Leaders identify precisely the linguistic needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). They support teachers to understand how to meet pupils' needs in a meaningful way to bridge any barriers to language acquisition. For example, teachers use strategies such as feelings charts, picture cards, word lists, pupil pairings and careful questioning and allow more time for pupils to process their responses. As a result, pupils acquire linguistic skills, access the curriculum effectively and learn well.
26. There is an appropriate framework for assessment in place. This is used by teachers and leaders to identify how well pupils are faring in the curriculum, and who needs extra help to keep up in their learning. Many teachers use this information well, to identify and guide pupils about where they can improve their understanding and work. However, some teachers do not use a range of assessment information precisely enough when providing subject specific guidance and feedback to pupils. When this occurs, some pupils do not know how to improve their work and understanding as well as they should.

27. Over time, pupils develop a thorough understanding of important foundational skills. For example, older pupils skilfully write for different purposes. They understand how the structure of a letter of complaint requires different writing skills from those associated with advertising a favourite chocolate biscuit. Pupils write with focus and precision. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a thorough understanding of the curriculum. Many go on to achieve scholarships or places in selective senior schools through entrance examinations where a pre-requisite is high academic achievement.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

29. There is a well-planned and taught PSHE curriculum, which successfully incorporates the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. The curriculum is updated regularly to reflect important societal topics and parents are consulted about the content of the RSE curriculum. Topics are revisited regularly in an age-appropriate way, strengthening pupils' depth of understanding. The curriculum is enhanced by visiting speakers and through links with local initiatives. For example, pupils in Year 6 visit a workshop run by the local authority, focusing on the dangers surrounding drug misuse and how to respond to inappropriate online activity. This supports pupils as they prepare for their senior schools.
30. Leaders have devised a well-planned and taught syllabus for the teaching of physical education (PE). Pupils are taught about a range of sports, specialist skills and approaches to fitness. As a result, pupils build a skills base which equips them well, including involvement in team games. Pupils participate in local events where the focus is on inclusion and non-competitive elements, as well as a range of matches at both local and national levels. These include swimming, cross country and football. Celebration assemblies provide opportunities where pupils' successes are shared.
31. Appropriate systems are in place for managing health and safety responsibilities, including regular reviews of arrangements. The school's health and safety committee meets regularly to ensure arrangements are thorough. Leaders make effective use of internal expertise whilst utilising advice from external specialists. Premises and accommodation are well maintained. First aid provision is appropriate, including an effectively resourced and used medical room. Staff are suitably trained in all areas of health and safety and first aid, including paediatric first aid. Records of first aid and health and safety are diligently maintained. Pupils are properly supervised, including through appropriate staff to pupil ratios in the early years.
32. Leaders support pupils' spiritual development and emotional wellbeing through subjects such as art and music and through providing teaching areas that are places where they feel calm and secure. Support for pupils' mental health includes worry boxes, feelings jars and colour monsters. The latter supports younger children's ability to express their feelings and share any concerns. Additional emotional support sessions are provided as required by trained staff. These positively impact on pupils' emotional regulation and wellbeing. This in turn helps them to flourish in other areas of school life, including academically and socially.
33. Staff in the early years build warm relationships with the children. This helps to ensure that children feel emotionally secure and confident. Leaders focus on promoting children's self-esteem and self-confidence. This is achieved through positive praise which is combined with consistent routines. Activities are well thought out to support the children's physical development. These include cutting, sticking and tracing lines to support fine motor development. Besides the PE curriculum, leaders provide opportunities for children to learn skills such as balancing and co-ordinating. Effective use of a range of outdoor areas supports this.
34. Leaders promote a positive behaviour and anti-bullying strategy. Staff ensure that any behavioural issues are recorded in detail and that there is a consistency in the approach of staff. Pupils are confident that any matter raised will be dealt with effectively, fairly and promptly by leaders. Leaders effectively utilise a well-embedded rewards and sanctions system. As a result, pupils strive

to demonstrate positive behaviour. This is reflected in the high quality of social interactions around the school.

35. A suitable register of admission is maintained. It contains all the required detail and information pertaining to each pupil. Attendance registers are appropriate. Pupils' absences are followed up in a timely manner by administrative staff.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 36. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

37. Leaders actively support pupils' understanding about the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion. Through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and advertisement around the school, pupils understand and learn about the importance of respect and tolerance for those with different faiths, backgrounds and beliefs. Events, such as cultural weeks and nationally themed lunches, support pupils' knowledge and awareness. Teachers provide pupils with a range of literature that reflects the diversity in British society. Consequently, pupils develop an appreciation and respect for those whose lives and beliefs may be different to their own.
38. Leaders use the school's aims and ethos to support pupils' understanding about the right way to approach and manage situations. As a result, they readily take responsibility for their own actions. The giving of house points when pupils make sensible and informed choices strengthens pupils' awareness of a positive moral pathway. Pupils develop a mature sense of right and wrong.
39. Younger children are taught how to share and take turns. They develop friendships through understanding the importance of mutual support and appreciation. This develops into a comprehension of wider and differing perspectives and making careful choices. These skills support children's social development so that they are well ready to transition into Year 1.
40. Leaders support pupils to develop a rich understanding of the importance of community service. Pupils contribute positively by taking on roles as responsible citizens in the school and wider community. Older pupils take on roles such as weekly buddies to support younger pupils. Roles, such as head pupils and house captains, provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership and social skills. These support pupils' understanding of being responsible citizens. Leaders have established meaningful links with external partners often responding to the ideas of pupils. These include local charities that focus on children in poverty and visits to local care homes.
41. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values across subjects and year groups. This curriculum is supplemented by well-planned visits to places such as the Houses of Parliament, the local magistrates' court and a police museum. These visits support pupils' understanding of democracy, the legal system and strengthen their understanding of the civil and criminal law. Through the activities of the school council, open hustings and school elections, pupils experience the democratic system in practical ways.
42. Leaders develop pupils' understanding and respect for public institutions and services. Visits from people working in public services such as health, the police, dentistry, the fire brigade and a lifeboat charity support pupils' understanding and knowledge of the importance of such groups in society. Leaders support pupils' understanding of important national events, such as bonfire night celebration and Remembrance Day services.
43. Leaders actively promote pupils' economic understanding through the curriculum. For example, through mathematics and PSHE, pupils develop an understanding of money and its value. Older pupils engage in a construction project where costing materials and learning how to use an allocated budget wisely provides valuable insight into work in the construction sector. Leaders expose pupils to aspects such as the Chancellor's budget to support understanding of parliamentary working and economic understanding.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Leaders have embedded a positive safeguarding culture throughout the school. They have established processes and systems that are well understood and used by staff and pupils. These are accurately reflected in the safeguarding policy which is available on the school's website. Process and policy reflect statutory responsibilities, contextual issues and local guidelines.
46. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained. The regular in-person training includes information such as that related to extremism, radicalisation and low-level concerns. This training is supplemented by online modules and regular staff briefings. These processes ensure that staff carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. They are vigilant to signs of concern and report these in a timely way, including any concerns about staff working with pupils. Staff prioritise the best interests of pupils.
47. Knowledgeable leaders with designated responsibility carry out their roles with diligence. They ensure that they act promptly on any concerns raised. They liaise effectively with external agencies and safeguarding partners to seek guidance, gain further support or make referrals. The proprietor body checks on the effectiveness of leaders' actions, ensuring that they are taking effective and reasonable action to keep pupils safe.
48. Pupils are taught the different ways as to how they can raise any concerns or worries that they have. Through information and communication technology (ICT) lessons and the PSHE curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when working online.
49. Leaders ensure that there are suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems in place. Leaders carefully monitor how pupils and staff use the school's internet and digital devices. When incidents occur, leaders act in a timely way to secure pupils' safety. They regularly review this information to see if there is any wider learning or curriculum adaptations that are needed.
50. There are appropriate systems in place to ensure that all pre-employment checks are carried out before a person commences work at the school. Such checks are supported by detailed staff files. These checks are recorded accurately on the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Forest School
Department for Education number	358/6008
Address	Forest School Moss Lane Timperley Altrincham Cheshire WA15 6LJ
Phone number	0161 980 4975
Email address	office@forestschool.co.uk
Website	www.forestschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Bellevue Education International Ltd
Chair	Mr Mark Malley
Headteacher	Mr Graeme Booth
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	214
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 September 2022

Information about the school

52. Forest School is a co-educational day school, located in Timperley, near Altrincham. The proprietor body of the school is Bellevue Education International Ltd.
53. The regulatory compliance inspection in September 2022 identified several Standards and EYFS requirements that were not met. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned ISI to undertake an unannounced progress monitoring inspection in October 2023. Inspectors judged that the requirements of the previously unmet Standards and EYFS requirements were now met.
54. The school applied to the DfE to make a material change to the school's registration to increase the school's total capacity from 200 to 218 pupils. Inspectors conducted an inspection at the request of the DfE in June 2024 and recommended that the material change be approved.
55. There are 73 children in the early years comprising one Nursery, one Kindergarten and one Reception class.
56. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
57. The school has identified English as an additional language for 67 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to encourage each child to reach their full potential and strive for excellence in all areas of school life. It aims to foster pupils' self-esteem, confidence, and their ability to use their individual talents as lifelong learners. The school strives to promote strong partnerships with families and the community.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

2 to 4 December 2025

59. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the safeguarding director
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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