

Progress School

Gough Lane, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 6AQ

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

1

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

1

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

1

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

1

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

1

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

1

Leadership and management

Outstanding

1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- All staff are ambitious for the students and enable them to make outstanding progress with their communication and social skills from mostly very low starting points.
- The development of the school's 'access to learning skills' programme provides excellent opportunities for all students to make outstanding progress with their communication skills.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teaching and care staff, working together continuously, have a shared understanding of how their students learn.
- The school provides an extremely high quality of safety and security for all students, taking full account of their vulnerability and anxieties.
- The outstanding quality of leadership and management from the proprietor and senior staff has ensured that all staff have a common vision and a belief that each student can make significant progress as a result of committed teaching and care.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected following one day's notice.
- Six lessons were observed, taught by five members of staff and supported by a number of additional staff.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, a senior manager, senior teacher and additional teaching and support staff.
- A range of documentation was read and discussed, including policy documents, examples of students' work and records of progress.
- Additional information was considered from one interview with the parents of a student, eleven recent questionnaires returned by staff, and questionnaires returned by parents and two students in the current school year.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Progress School is an independent, co-educational special school, owned by Progress Care and Education limited, which opened in 1996 and is located near Preston in Lancashire.
- It provides residential care and education for 52 weeks of the year for students aged from seven to 19 years who exhibit severe learning disabilities, challenging behaviour and autism.
- There are currently 12 students on roll; all have a statement of special educational needs and are placed and funded by local authorities.
- All students are resident in one of the company's children's homes located in the area. These homes have all been inspected in the last twelve months.
- The school aims to 'provide learning and achievement opportunities for all students as they move towards adult life'.
- The school was last inspected in 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Introduce the use of interactive whiteboards to enhance the learning experiences of students.
- Ensure that the school development plan is up to date and reflects the findings of the school's rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students make outstanding progress in their learning from very low starting points as a result of excellent teaching and care. Planning for learning is precise and appropriate to reinforce key skills. Students become increasingly settled and able to cope with the routines and requirements of the classroom. Students who may come to the school with disrupted and negative learning experiences are enabled to benefit at their own pace from the opportunities provided. The school has rightly identified that appropriate progress for some students consists of attainment of the early learning goals. For some students progress is achieved through the effective development of personal skills, for example, in managing personal hygiene or communication regarding personal needs. The development of communication skills, for example through picture exchange, increases students' access to a wide variety of learning experiences. The small number of students who are capable of writing are provided with excellent challenge as they develop letter formation and identification of words. Early reading skills are developed through persistent dialogue using pictures and visual prompts. Students make good progress in the development of relevant numeracy skills such as counting, understanding time and sequence, or distinguishing between different shapes. Students are prepared extremely well for life beyond school and involvement in the local community. For a small number of students measurable improvements in verbal communication represent excellent progress; the majority have no verbal communication. Excellent records are maintained of small steps achieved for each individual, for example, the ability to enter a classroom or to communicate using timelines and pictures. Many students have enhanced sensory responses and appropriate strategies are developed to improve their tolerance of noise and to communicate their needs. The school's use of assessment against the national P scores and early learning goals demonstrates that students make outstanding progress over time.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students make outstanding progress with their behaviour and personal development. Excellent attention is given to their personal development in all aspects of school life. Staff know students exceptionally well and have a shared understanding of their individual personal behaviour and needs. Students enjoy attending school and their attendance is outstanding. Sensory requirements are rightly given a high priority and provision is specific and precise for each individual student to enable them to tolerate the classroom or to explore the environment beyond the school. The school has an appropriate approach to the management of behaviour without sanctions but students are helped to learn and progress from incidents of anxiety or behavioural outbursts. Excellent records are maintained which demonstrate strong evidence of students' progress with their emotional and social development. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to engage with the local community at appropriate levels of interaction, for example, in using local shops and the leisure centre. One student works successfully with pupils in a local primary school for an afternoon each week. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to enable students to engage and belong within the wider community and excellent use is made of local facilities to extend students' awareness and involvement in events and activities. All members of staff have a good awareness of risks posed by individual students' behaviour and take appropriate actions to moderate these within the classroom.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding and enables students to make excellent progress, in small steps, particularly with the development of their social skills. All staff working with the students demonstrate remarkable patience and resilience in understanding what motivates and engages them. All staff have consistently high expectations of what students can do and believe in their ability to make sustained progress. The teaching of communication skills and 'access to learning'

skills is systematic and based on an effective analysis of what students need to be able to do to move on to the next steps. There is constant and deliberate reinforcement of learning. Students are increasingly introduced to information and communication technology on an individual basis but the school has not implemented the use of interactive whiteboards to aid students' sensory development and communication skills. The recently-introduced systems for assessment of students' skills provide a secure basis for planning the next stages in learning. The quality of planning for lessons is excellent and provides outstanding support for residential staff working in classrooms. When they are ready, students learn to communicate and interact with other students. There is an appropriate emphasis on the reinforcement of small practical skills in the daily routines of the school, for example, learning to manage the latch mechanism to enter school and secure the gates. There is a very high level of adult support and role modelling which enables students to take part in and enjoy, for example, physical education lessons. The majority of students experience challenges with motor control but effective strategies are provided to repeat and reinforce specific skills. Excellent attention is given to students' physical needs and conditions for sustained concentration, for example, through drinks and snacks breaks. The school has developed its own approach to the assessment of the communication curriculum. Thorough and comprehensive record sheets, using age-equivalent scores and levels, enable staff to understand the small steps in the development of students' functional communication and social interaction. Small steps of progress are captured building up strong evidence of outstanding individual progress. The information gained from this assessment informs the planning of the next stages in teaching specific skills. The consistency of approach, shared by all staff, enables students to make outstanding progress in the development of personal skills and readiness for learning.

Quality of curriculum**Outstanding**

The curriculum is outstanding and specifically and suitably tailored to meet the individual needs of students. With the advice of the school's speech and language therapist the school has developed its own excellent 'access to learning' curriculum. The curriculum provides for a progression of experiences which build appropriately on each small step of success. While the emphasis is on the development of communication and social skills, the curriculum involves students in activities covering all the required areas of learning. Staff are ambitious for students to progress through the curriculum. Excellent use is made of a variety of sources to plan the curriculum, including elements of the National Curriculum where these are appropriate. The use of ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) as an accreditation system for some students is outstanding. Photographic records demonstrate the extent of progress they are making with practical learning activities. Staff allow for students' choices within a carefully planned programme of learning. Students build up their learning skills sequentially, slowly but methodically, within the carefully structured sequence of planned themes. Strong reinforcement and repetition underpin work in the classroom. Excellent attention is given to periods of transition and the provision integrates the residential and school experiences very successfully. Residential care workers work alongside teachers and individually with students. Parents and carers comment very positively about the effectiveness of this integration and the security it provides for students. A range of valuable off-site activities contribute to the breadth of experiences available at suitable points to extend learning. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the stages of development through which students grow and make excellent use of experiences often associated with learning for a much younger age group. Provision is available to support young people into adult life through, for example, college placements or work with a local charitable trust. This transition is managed extremely well.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Outstanding**

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and all the independent school standards are met. Excellent levels of supervision and support are provided for all students. All the required policy documents are in place, and are implemented consistently, including those for the management of behaviour, the prevention of bullying, and all aspects of health and safety. All

required routines for health and safety, fire safety and premises safety are thorough and recorded in an exemplary manner. Staff training in essential areas, including child protection and first aid, is up-to-date and comprehensive records are maintained to ensure refresher training is not overlooked. Students' behaviour is managed in an outstanding manner and agreed systems and procedures are implemented in a very consistent way to ensure the safety of staff and students. Excellent records are maintained of the behaviour and development of each student; these provide excellent information to inform all staff in their day-to-day work with students. The school provides high levels of individual supervision with an excellent focus on any risk-taking behaviours. Risk assessments for all activities, both on and off-site are exemplary. There is an appropriate focus on the health needs of students, integrating care in their homes and the school. Direct supervision is the norm with the development of appropriate independence, for example in the use of scissors. All the required checks on the suitability of staff are completed systematically and entered in a single central register. Admission and attendance registers are maintained systematically and comprehensively.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The excellence of the school's provision and outcomes is achieved as a result of thorough monitoring and hands-on involvement by school leaders. There is a clear drive throughout the school to ensure that all students receive the best that can be provided and expectations of what they can achieve are high. The school's policy documents and areas of essential training are systematic and well targeted. Effective induction training is provided for all staff. The staff are universally supportive of the work of the school and present a coherent vision of high aspirations. Staff are held to account for the quality of their work and respond positively to new opportunities; the use of lesson observations contributes to decisions about staff professional development needs. The curriculum has been developed to increasingly serve the specific and diverse needs of the students. Staff are professional in the implementation of their roles and provide excellent role models for the students.

The premises and accommodation are maintained to a high standard and provide excellent facilities, adaptable to the changing needs of individual students. The school engages effectively with parents and carers who are delighted with the impact on the experience of their children. The school's brochure and website provide excellent information for parents and carers and these are supplemented with regular newsletters. The school's complaints procedure provides suitable arrangements for parents and carers to express any concerns; there have been no formal complaints since the last inspection. The use of self-evaluation is robust and there are reliable systems to monitor progress. Areas for improvement were taken forward from the previous inspection; a number of the planned improvements have been achieved and the development plan is in need of updating in order to ensure that the existing outstanding provision is sustained. Where training has been provided this has been implemented exceptionally well, for example in the teaching of music. Excellent feedback is received from parents and carers who identify the individualised nature of learning programmes as a major strength contributing to students' progress. Regular contact is maintained with parents and carers, typically by email and they are involved in the preparation for review meetings twice a year. All the independent school standards are met and mostly exceeded through excellent provision and outcomes.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
|---------|-------------|---|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 3 | Adequate | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses. |

School details

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|--------------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 131138 |
| Inspection number | 420179 |
| DfE registration number | 888/6030 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.

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| Type of school | Students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders. |
| School status | Independent residential special school |
| Age range of pupils | 7–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 12 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Margaret Calvert |
| Headteacher | No headteacher in post |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 January 2010 |
| Annual fees | £180,000–£250,000 |
| Telephone number | 01772 334832 |
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