

Liverpool Progressive School

Rice Lane, Walton, Liverpool, Merseyside, L9 1NR

Inspection dates 24–26 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- The proprietors and senior leaders demonstrate an outstanding vision for how the lives of students with complex learning needs may be transformed. They implement this vision to an extremely high standard and have ensured the continuous improvement of the school since the last inspection.
- Students mostly enter the school with very limited ability to communicate verbally. They make outstanding progress with their ability to talk or use alternative methods of communication effectively.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are exemplary. Policies and procedures are implemented consistently by very well trained staff.
- Students learn to control their frustration and manage complex emotional barriers. As a result they are continuously engaged in productive learning.
- Senior leaders, working closely with the Embrace Group head of education, ensure that the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and learning support assistants are united and consistent in the high quality of support and challenge provided for students.
- Outstanding teaching ensures that students make excellent progress in their learning and personal development. Teachers and learning support assistants work exceedingly well together to provide support and challenge for students.
- Staff teams are successfully developing a common understanding of how to measure each small step in students' progress. However, not all staff members are equally confident about how best to use this information to deepen and extend students' achievement.
- Students' achievement is outstanding, exemplified by the number of unit awards that they successfully achieve. Their progress from very low starting points with reading, communication and numeracy is excellent.
- The provision for post-16 students is outstanding. Leaders and staff share a common vision for the transition of post-16 students into fulfilling lives on leaving school. The sixth form is highly effective in achieving this.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed students' learning in a number of lessons in a range of different subjects. All observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Examples of students' work were scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with members of the proprietorial body, the group's education manager, the headteacher and senior leadership team, and with several members of staff.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for these to be reviewed. The inspector spoke with a small number of parents and carers.
- The inspector met with two members of the student council and informally with a number of other students. He also considered 26 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspector read a wide range of school documents and considered a wealth of photographic evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included policies, procedures and records relating to the curriculum, students' achievement and behaviour, safeguarding, and premises and fire safety.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Liverpool Progressive School, previously known as Walton Progressive School, is located in purpose-built premises in the Walton area of Liverpool. It operates under the proprietorship of the Embrace Group.
- The school provides full-time education for secondary aged boys and girls with severe learning disabilities, autism, mental health conditions, complex needs and challenging behaviour.
- All students have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan. A number are in the care of their local authorities.
- The school is registered to admit up to 33 students. There are currently 12 students on roll, in the age range 14 to 19 years. Students are grouped according to their individual stage of development and personal social and learning needs.
- The school does not make use of the services of any alternative providers.
- The school was last inspected in October 2011.
- Students recently achieved second place for the school in the proprietor's national Growing for Gold competition.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of students by ensuring that all teaching and learning support staff: are confident in assessing the small steps in students' progress continuously against agreed criteria have a common understanding of how to deepen and extend students' learning across all subjects studied.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding because the proprietors, Embrace Group staff and senior leaders implement a robust, shared vision for what students with complex needs are able to learn and achieve.
- Senior leaders, working extremely effectively with the group's education manager, engage in continuous and productive evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Senior leaders trust and support each other as they work tirelessly to ensure that the needs of each student are understood and met appropriately. They give excellent attention to students' statements of special educational needs and individual education plans. These are reviewed and improved regularly and adjustments are made to students' individual timetables to ensure that they make continuous progress.
- Middle leaders, including staff responsible for the development of subject teaching and senior learning support staff, make a strong contribution to the leadership of learning and students' well-being.
- All students have equal access to the full range of learning activities and subjects. Classroom learning is continuously enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities, including excellent opportunities for sensory stimulation, together with creative and aesthetic experiences.
- Students thoroughly enjoy their daily life in school and demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning. Disadvantaged students, often with negative previous experiences of school, are enabled to make excellent progress with the development of essential skills for life.
- The school's shared vision and commitment to excellence are shared widely across the staff.
- All staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the seamless nature of the school's arrangements for students' personal development and their learning. All activities throughout the school day contribute to students' emotional and social development as well as improving their knowledge and understanding.
- Arrangements for the management of staff performance are robust and effective. Contributions of each member of staff are observed regularly and there are good opportunities for teachers and learning support assistants to discuss their work and training needs with their line managers. The school makes a strong commitment to the effective professional development and training of staff members.
- Outstanding attention is given to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are equipped with an increasing range of individual strategies to cope with the demands of life in modern Britain. Staff work unstintingly to ensure that each student develops a level of resilience and independence which enables them to tackle many of their individual barriers to a rewarding life after school.
- Students, at their individual levels of understanding, are helped to experience the services and activities available to them in the local community, and to contribute to the community, for example through regular fund-raising for charitable causes.
- Robust arrangements are in place for careers advice and the management of students' transition from school to further education and care. Senior staff are very aware of the vulnerability of students at transition points in their lives; consequently, they work closely with a range of external agencies to minimise risk and to secure appropriate resources to promote students' well-being.
- Senior leaders maintain exemplary oversight of all aspects of safeguarding, including the safe recruitment of staff, regular staff training in child protection and through teaching students how to keep themselves safe. Senior leaders ensure that all the statutory requirements for safeguarding students are met.
- Senior leaders have implemented excellent strategies for communicating with parents and carers, for example through regular coffee mornings in the students' training dining room.
- The robust school development plan correctly identifies areas for future development. Existing arrangements for the continued professional development of staff, together with the exemplary shared vision of senior leaders, demonstrate the school's capacity for continued improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The proprietors, through their excellent management arrangements, ensure that there is an appropriate balance between support and accountability in their relationship with the school's leaders. The proprietors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths through robust arrangements for review and reporting by the senior leadership team.
 - The group's education manager is a highly effective link between the school's senior management

team and the group's directors; he ensures that they are provided with appropriate information about the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement.

The proprietors manage financial resources rigorously and ensure that the school has access to appropriate levels of classroom equipment and learning resources.

The proprietors ensure that rigorous arrangements for the management of staff performance are implemented consistently; staff are provided with wide-ranging opportunities to develop their skills and to advance their careers through high quality in-house and external training.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. The majority enter the school with negative previous experience of school. They have mostly been unable to integrate into group learning or have not attended regularly because of their inability to adjust to the arrangements provided for them.
- The quality of students' engagement in learning is impressive. They enjoy attending school and parents comment on the enormous advances they make with their attendance and cooperation with the school's expectations.
- Students demonstrate outstanding improvements in their attitudes to school. The majority are able to respond positively to realistic and increasing levels of independence. Students' overall attendance is above average.
- Students develop respect and trust for the staff with whom they work. They work and live cooperatively, for example in team games, such as seated volleyball, and when dining together at lunchtimes. The atmosphere around the school and in lessons is calm and productive.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour do occur as students with complex emotional, behavioural and mental health needs work through periods of frustration and anxiety. The staff demonstrate impressive patience, sensitivity and resilience in managing any unacceptable behaviour. They implement agreed procedures for supporting students and ensuring their safety and the safety of others in a robust and consistent manner.
- The staff provide high levels of continuous supervision, based on a careful assessment of the individual needs of students. Within this safe and caring environment, students develop increasing self-confidence and a willingness to take part in group activities. On entry to the school, a number of students will only work within their individually allocated rooms but rapidly learn to integrate into group settings and to learn together.
- Students begin to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and actions and to understand the differences between correct and unacceptable behaviour. There is considerable respect for others in this diverse community; in addition, through events such as the celebration of Chinese New Year, students learn about the diversity of lifestyles in the wider community.
- There are no incidents of bullying recorded in the school's robust incident records. Students are helped to understand the consequences of their actions and to apologise if their actions cause any distress to others.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All students are provided with one-to-one or two-to-one levels of supervision. This ensures their personal safety and security and enables staff to give high levels of attention to their communication and learning needs.
- The excellent arrangements for the maintenance and refurbishment of the premises ensure that staff and students work in a safe and secure environment. Policies and procedures for all aspects of safe working, including rigorous regular fire safety checks, are implemented consistently.
- Staff are trained to appropriate levels in safe recruitment, child protection, the management of behaviour, first aid and fire safety. Risks are assessed and mitigated appropriately in all aspects of school life.
- Robust arrangements are in place to review practice regularly and to ensure that the school complies with all the regulations related to the safeguarding of students.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding and ensures that students make excellent progress from their

various starting points.

- Teaching groups and individual learning are organised on the basis of rigorous measures for the assessment of individual students' needs and characteristics. Levels of supervision and support for all students are high and appropriate in all classrooms.
- A major strength of the school's teaching is the high level of cooperation and joint working between teachers and learning support assistants. This ensures an excellent combination of subject expertise and individual support and challenge for students in all lessons.
- The staff work effectively together to ensure safe working arrangements. Levels of supervision are adjusted flexibly and appropriately, depending upon the changing frame of mind and disposition of each student throughout the day.
- Teaching staff provide challenging work which stretches students' learning and communication skills suitably. Students are assisted in the use of picture exchange and familiar symbols as they settle into the expectations of the classroom at the start of the day. This results in excellent engagement and cooperation between students as they listen and respond with interest to, for example, a story.
- Students tackled challenging work, such as working out percentages in mathematics and understanding compass direction, as they drew maps to scale in a geography lesson. Teachers plan suitable activities such as these and check the learning of individual students continuously throughout each lesson.
- Learning support assistants work effectively alongside students to ensure that they understand their tasks and the methods required to achieve success. In some cases they demonstrate considerable success in enabling students to extend and deepen their knowledge; the development of this cooperative approach to learning is a suitable priority in the school's development plan.
- Students enjoy practical learning activities and rapidly improve their skill levels and independence. Students, for example, bake scones and ginger biscuits with considerable success. They demonstrate increasing independence in understanding the details of the recipes, in measuring ingredients accurately, and working with appropriate equipment. Practical learning such as this is very well prepared by teaching staff and supported effectively where required by individual learning support assistants.
- Students enjoy and make excellent progress with creative, aesthetic and therapeutic learning experiences. The walls of the school are vibrant and colourful with examples of students' art work, horticulture in the school grounds, photographs of horse riding and outdoor activities, and presentations of social and cultural events. Students' participation and enjoyment are evident in all these displays.
- Students demonstrate the ability to sustain their concentration and to remain on-task for significant periods of time. As a result, they complete substantial periods of learning without interruption or distraction.
- Arrangements for the assessment of students' progress are very good. Staff measure students' small steps of progress across the various subjects with particular emphasis on the development of reading, literacy and numeracy.
- Periodic tests and continuous assessment of students' classwork are used to track students' progress against the targets in their personal education plans. However, teachers and learning support assistants are still in the process of developing their confidence in the implementation of these arrangements in order to deepen and extend students' achievement. The headteacher uses data from the assessment of students' achievements to judge the extent of their individual progress over time.
- All members of staff working with the students are flexible in taking on new responsibilities and ensuring that the school engages in a process of continuous improvement.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are very low for their ages. In many cases they have withdrawn from previous placements or have failed to engage in productive learning.
- Students make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development as a result of excellent teaching and access to an imaginative range of learning opportunities. The majority of students make progress which is at least in line with, and often exceeds, expected rates of progress. This represents outstanding achievement over time from their starting points.
- As they settle into the expectations of the school, the majority of students make small, measurable improvements in their readiness to learn. Many, for example, will initially respond only to one-to-one teaching in individual rooms. Over time, and often rapidly, they learn to engage with adults and to cooperate with each other.
- The majority of students make exceptional improvements in their communication skills. For some this consists of adapting to the use of picture exchange and symbols as means of expressing their needs or

their understanding. Others with limited oral communication develop speaking skills with increasing accuracy and understanding.

- A number of students develop their writing to a standard where they can record personal information or answers to questions with increasingly legible handwriting and accuracy in their use of the basic rules of written communication. This represents outstanding progress, often exceeding nationally expected rates of progress, from their starting points.
- Students also develop secure numeracy skills. These remain well below the national average but represent excellent progress, for example in their ability to calculate and record answers using the four rules of number. They develop sound skills in the application of these skills in practical situations such as measuring ingredients or calculating distances.
- The majority of students achieve appropriate external accreditation through unit awards for their work across a range of subjects and areas of experience. These represent considerable achievements.
- All students in the school have disabilities and/or special educational needs which act as barriers to their learning; they are enabled to make excellent progress in overcoming the impact of a number of these barriers gradually. Disadvantaged students make similar rates of progress to their peers. There are no high achieving students working above the average attainment levels for their age.
- A number of students make excellent progress with the development of their reading skills. They enjoy reading and being read to. The staff are skilled at enabling students to understand the events and meanings in stories read together.
- Students make exceptionally strong progress in developing independence skills in relation to their starting points. All remain in education or training beyond the school leaving age and develop a level of personal autonomy which enables them to contribute meaningfully to day-to-day decisions which affect their future well-being.
- The range of students' excellent progress is extended widely as they respond positively to opportunities to draw and paint, to take part in team games, to enjoy horse riding and swimming, and to contribute their ideas for the improvement of the school. They contribute regularly to community events such as the Christmas crafts and market or the group's national Growing for Gold competition.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The school does not provide separate learning arrangements for post-16 students. These students are appropriately integrated into teaching groups and the full range of school activities together with other students. This is an appropriate response to their individual rates of personal development and cognitive abilities. As a result, students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are excellent. They are extremely safe and secure.
- Excellent teaching ensures post-16 students continue to make exemplary rates of progress as other students in the school, together with continuing growth in their personal development.
- The older students, when ready, are provided with suitable opportunities for small-scale work experience, usually working alongside the school staff in suitable practical or organisational tasks. One student has recently completed a play-leaders' qualification.
- Highly effective leadership and management ensure that post-16 students are very well prepared for life after school. A number of the students in the school's post-16 provision move on to the company's 19+ provision or the post-18 resource centre on the same site as the school. Other school leavers attend day centres or similar sheltered provision.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	133309
Inspection number	454265
DfE registration number	341/6047

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	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Embrace Group
Chair	Trish Lee
Headteacher	Linda Butcher
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2011
Weekly fees (day pupils)	£1,176 – £1,501 per week
Telephone number	0151 525 4004
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