

# Progress Schools Ltd

7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–7 July 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leadership and management have improved and are good. Leaders ensure that pupils achieve good outcomes, and that all the current independent school standards are met.
- Teachers are particularly skilled in engaging with pupils who have problems behaving well in school. Full advantage is taken of the small class sizes to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to improve their learning.
- Pupils make good progress from low starting points. Pupils usually move on to appropriate courses at local colleges and providers of further education at the end of Year 11.
- Good teaching enables pupils to gain a sense of achievement and become more confident about their abilities and potential.
- Good relationships between adults and staff are quickly established on the basis of mutual trust and respect. Pupils are set clear boundaries and respond positively by behaving much better in this school than they have in the past.
- The school's systems and procedures to safeguard children follow national guidelines and are secure. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there are very few, if any, serious incidents of bullying or misbehaviour.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. The school prepares well for pupils' needs by ensuring that its initial assessments of pupils' previous attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are thorough.
- Pupils gain a variety of vocational qualifications which they can build on when they progress to further education or training.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of pupils do not reach the goals of which they are capable because the curriculum is not sufficiently well matched to their needs.
- Teachers do not always support pupils well enough in practising their speaking skills and enabling them to present themselves more positively to the wider world.
- A small proportion of pupils do not attend regularly enough to fully benefit from what the school offers.
- The school does not ensure that the information received from pupils' previous schools is sufficiently detailed to allow teachers to build on pupils' prior learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Broaden the range of curriculum activities to ensure that all pupils' learning needs are met, especially enhancing opportunities for outdoor activities.
- Further develop communication with pupils' referring schools to ensure that teachers gain sufficient information about pupils' interests and aptitudes to build on when designing their learning programmes.
- Ensure that teachers focus on improving pupils' speaking skills to enable them to grow in confidence, particularly when they are in unfamiliar situations.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The relatively new headteacher and other senior leaders have worked very effectively in the last few months to improve the impact of the school. They have refocused the vision to provide a real alternative for pupils who have found it very hard to engage with mainstream education.
- All the staff responded to the survey and stated they are proud to work at the school. They recognise the improvements that have been made this year.
- Improving the quality of teaching is given a high priority. Leaders have an accurate understanding of teaching strengths and where it needs to improve. As a result, teaching has improved and is now good.
- Marking is frequent, identifying errors and reinforcing success, in accordance with the school's marking policy.
- The new leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of education offered. This has been recognised by the school's outside partners and has resulted in a significant increase in the number of referrals from local schools. Leaders also recognise that there is still more work to do to reach their ambition of becoming an outstanding school. They are planning for a range of measures, including enhancing the curriculum and moving to a new site, to ensure that the school does not rest on its laurels.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum which is interwoven into a number of subjects. For a small minority of pupils, it does not allow them to take part in a wide enough range of activities. For example, there is not enough scope in the school's outdoor pursuits and vocational activities to fully enhance pupils' life chances after school.
- The leaders of the school have built up good working relationships with referring schools, such as through daily and weekly meetings to discuss pupils' behaviour and attendance. However, the school does not always ensure that it receives sufficient information about pupils' prior learning from referring agencies. Consequently, teachers are not always able to match pupils' learning to their aptitudes and abilities.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The ethos of the school is based on showing people respect and being tolerant. Pupils study current affairs and take part in a range of enrichment activities, including looking at the wider world and studying different cultures.
- Safeguarding requirements for recruitment of staff meet government requirements. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection. They are also aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Parents are often contacted by the school to discuss their children's progress and are provided with reports on a regular basis. The feedback the school has received from parents has been largely positive, although there is a recognition that leaders do not make sufficient use of this feedback to help them evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Leaders have used continuing professional development to improve provision. However, sometimes the focus is not sufficiently sharp to enable them to help pupils develop new skills, knowledge and understanding.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors (directors) have been fully committed to bringing about a transformation of the school and moving it from requiring improvement to being good. They recognise that they have made some very positive first steps but are still ambitious to reach even higher goals.
  - The school's website provides all the required basic information for parents and carers, but leaders recognise that it does not provide information which would help pupils to enhance their own learning.
  - The chief executive officer and managing director know the school very well. They clearly articulate the vision for the future and know where the strengths and weaknesses of the provision lie.
  - A revamped and improved self-evaluation process has been initiated leading to a more extensive development plan.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils immediately make better progress than that achieved at their previous schools because teachers are able to quickly build relationships with them in a learning atmosphere that has been adapted to more closely meet their needs. For most pupils this means they can develop a sense of security and rebuild their self-esteem about learning.
- The teachers' businesslike and no-nonsense approach ensures that pupils are kept on task and their attention is not allowed to wander. There is constant emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical and communication skills, especially in the use of the internet for research.
- Pupils are assessed frequently, the results being scrutinised by leaders and reported to parents. Analysis of assessment records shows that pupils' progress accelerates and is at least as good as similar pupils in mainstream schools.
- Pupils receive a wide range of additional support. Reliable evaluations of the impact of such intervention show that the support provided allows pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils ask for advice on how to improve their work and are keen to achieve well enough to gain high marks or praise from their teachers. They understand the school's high expectations for good conduct and active participation. Although some struggle at first to meet these expectations, once they understand the parameters set by the school for their behaviour, they actively engage in learning.
- Teachers promote respect for people and property in every lesson. Classrooms are well decorated and pupils' work shows that they are capable of high standards.
- All pupils are assessed when they join the school but sometimes the information the school receives about pupils' previous learning, aptitudes and abilities is very scant. This lack of precise information makes it difficult for teachers to ensure that work is always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the speaking skills that would enable them to become more confident in unfamiliar social situations.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is endorsed by partner schools and parents.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils were seen to be relaxed in the presence of adults known to them. This was because, as pupils said, the adults in the school adopt a supportive style which helps pupils to feel relaxed and unthreatened.
- The pupils spoken to said they feel safe, there are no incidents of bullying and serious misbehaviour in class is rare. They said they are confident that staff would support them if necessary across a wide range of issues including social as well as educational needs.
- The school meticulously records incidents of unacceptable behaviour, and it is clear that the school takes a robust approach to dealing with any, such as swearing, the use of mobile phones or showing disrespect. Records indicate that the action taken by staff is consistently applied and gradually reduces the frequency of any misbehaviour.
- The school is orderly, and morning, lunchtime and end-of-day routines are closely supervised. Pupils make good progress in developing self-confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy having boundaries, although that does not stop them from testing them.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. From the moment they arrive at the school, the first priority is to build an attitude of trust and mutual respect between adults and pupils. Pupils quickly learn that poor behaviour, such as the use of bad language, will not be tolerated, and adapt accordingly.
- Routines are quickly established and teachers are adept at nipping potentially disruptive situations in the bud. Incidents of physical aggression are very rare. This is because the staff apply consistent standards across the school. The vast majority of pupils improve their behaviour due to adults' relentless efforts to reinforce good behaviour and discourage poor conduct.

- The very high staff-to-pupil ratio is used effectively by adults to intervene and support pupils if the need arises. Pupils told the inspector that the calm atmosphere evident on the days of the inspection was typical of the norm.
- Poor attendance by a minority of pupils means that they cannot take full advantage of the facilities and experiences the school has to offer. Often these pupils have a long history of previous poor attendance. In most cases, however, pupils' attendance improves significantly once they have started at the school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **are good**

- From the day they start at school, most pupils make good progress. Many of the pupils present at the time of the inspection had only recently been admitted but they are already making good gains in their learning. Those who had recently left the school have gone to positive destinations in education, employment or training, such as attending a local college or joining an apprenticeship programme.
- Pupils' work shows that they reach the exacting standards set for them by teachers. They gain a variety of qualifications in work skills, English and mathematics. Although at a lower level than typical for their age, for most of these pupils these achievements represent their first success in school. They are clearly beginning to close the gaps between themselves and others in their peer group.
- Pupils benefit from a variety of different opportunities to practise their reading in school, and enjoy using computers and games to strengthen their grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. They respond well to teachers' suggestions about how they can improve their work.
- The artwork examined by the inspector indicates that pupils reach high standards based on their starting points, and carry out a variety of interesting activities. The displays on the walls of classrooms indicate a wide variety of achievement across a number of subjects.
- Pupils are keen to achieve basic qualifications so that they can progress onto higher levels at college or by taking part in an apprenticeship.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135555
<b>Inspection number</b>	10006022
<b>DfE registration number</b>	909/6097

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	15
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	8
<b>Proprietor</b>	Progress Schools Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Sandra Kirkham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Charlotte Barton
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,775
<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 586004
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.progress-schools.co.uk">www.progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@progress-schools.co.uk">info@progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7–8 February 2012

## Information about this school

- Progress Schools Ltd (Carlisle) is an independent day school registered for a total of 40 male and female pupils aged between 14 and 18 years. The school was inspected in June 2014 for the approval of an extension of age range to include pupils up to the age of 18. However, it no longer enrolls pupils who are over 16 years old.
- There are currently 15 pupils on roll, eight of whom attend on a part-time basis. In addition nine full-time pupils have just left Year 11. Many pupils are dual-registered with local schools or the local pupil referral unit (Gifford Centre).
- All pupils have a history of emotional and behavioural difficulty. Some have been permanently excluded from local maintained schools. Most pupils have a history of low levels of attendance. Currently there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Most begin the school with skills in mathematics and English that are below those typical for their age.
- A small number of children in the care of the local authority or other authorities, living in children's homes, attend the school.
- The school was previously part of the Education Youth Services group but was taken over by the Progress to Excellence group in January 2016. The group also offers education in four other schools, and accesses post-16 vocational training through a separate company. The school is located in a building in the centre of the city of Carlisle but is actively seeking new premises for October 2016.
- As well as a headteacher, there is a proprietor, a chief executive officer and a managing director responsible for aspects of leadership. There are three directors of the company.

- A high proportion of pupils on roll are supported by the pupil premium (government funding used by schools to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after).
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice and took place over two days.
- The inspector had discussions with the headteacher and all the staff. He also met the managing director and the chief executive officer. In addition, telephone conversations were held with an assistant headteacher of a referring academy and the headteacher of the local pupil referral unit run by the local authority.
- Although currently only 15 pupils are on roll, the inspection took into account historical data and other relevant information relating to pupils attending the school since the last inspection in 2012.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in six lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their views of the school. He also looked at the school's records of pupils' progression into future education, employment or training at age 16.
- The inspector considered the views of parents that the school had recorded. He spoke to a carer of one pupil in person. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a report.
- The inspector took account of the seven responses to the staff survey.
- In order to check the school's continued compliance with the independent schools standards, the inspector examined policies, procedures and other records. These included verifying the checks recorded on the school's single register of the suitability of adults to work with children, the attendance register, and the record of serious incidents.

## Inspection team

Andrew Johnson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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