

Progress School Northampton

8 Notre Dame Mews, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN1 2BG

Inspection dates

23–25 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment at both sites is good and enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points.
- Almost all pupils achieve external qualifications in English and mathematics and are prepared appropriately to move on to further education and employment.
- The school has a positive impact on the personal development of pupils, the great majority of whom demonstrate strong improvements in their behaviour, motivation and attendance.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for the staff and appreciate the individual attention they receive during lessons and in preparation for examinations.
- Pupils are safe at the school. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective and staff support pupils well to address difficulties and challenges in their personal lives.
- Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection. The new proprietor has had a strong impact on the rigour with which the school evaluates its provision and outcomes, and plans for improvement.
- All members of staff are proud to work at the school and believe that the school is well led and managed.
- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets the requirements of all the independent school standards.
- Senior leaders do not place sufficient emphasis on the evaluation of the level of challenge in teaching or of the qualifications achieved by the most able pupils. In a minority of cases, the most able pupils could achieve more.
- A small number of pupils are persistently absent.

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?

- The proprietor and senior leaders should regularly evaluate the consistency of provision and outcomes for the most able pupils to ensure that:
 - there is sufficient challenge in teaching and learning in all subjects
 - these pupils always achieve the higher-level qualifications of which they are capable.
- The proprietor and senior leaders should further develop strategies to ensure that no pupil is persistently absent from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards in the provision and outcomes at both school sites.
- The proprietor has achieved a lot in a short time since taking over the leadership and management of the school. They have completed a necessary restructure of staffing and provision and raised expectations for what the school can achieve.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have established a shared vision and a belief among the staff that the school can build successfully on its strong foundations. All staff who completed the inspection questionnaire agree that the school is well led and managed; leaders ensure that staff are motivated, respected and effective. They value the opportunities provided for staff training and development.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have implemented a range of effective procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work. They have worked closely with the proprietor to produce improvement plans that focus primarily on the improvement of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Staff have established respectful and trusting relationships with pupils. Reluctant learners are encouraged effectively to engage in learning and to achieve valuable qualifications.
- Senior leaders have created a suitably broad curriculum that enables all pupils to achieve academic success in external qualifications. While all the required areas of experience are available through the curriculum, the existing curriculum is under review with the intention of extending the range of vocational options available to pupils.
- The school provides appropriately for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The curriculum promotes British values, including an understanding of democracy and the rule of law, a commitment to equality and respect for diversity and the prevention of discrimination and intolerance. The curriculum includes a clear emphasis on pupils' contribution to the community.
- The proprietor and senior leaders have demonstrated a strong capacity for continued development and improvement.
- The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards if the requested material change to increase numbers to 55, and the registration of the Thrapston site as an independent school, are implemented.

Governance

- The governance of the school is effective. The proprietor's representatives work continuously with senior leaders to ensure consistency and effectiveness of practice across the company's schools. Senior leaders benefit enormously from joint working, through management committees, with governors and senior leaders in the company's other schools.

- Governors provide effective support and challenge for leaders and staff. They have created an ethos of improvement in which all staff are aware of the progress that the school is making and areas for further development.
- Governors demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the needs of hard-to-reach pupils and their families. They have an excellent understanding of the school's improving performance, including an awareness of the progress pupils are making towards a range of qualifications.
- Governors have not yet developed systems for the detailed analysis of pupils' progress from their starting points and the extent to which the most able pupils, in particular, are fulfilling their potential.
- Governors and senior leaders recognise that the attendance of a minority of pupils is not good enough. They make effective use of external agencies to assist with improvements in attendance but have not yet achieved the improvement to which they aspire.
- Governors and senior leaders have established suitable arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including the headteacher. They make effective use of an external consultancy service to contribute to its quality assurance and staff training responsibilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has produced a comprehensive safeguarding policy, which has regard for the latest statutory guidance. The policy is available to parents as a download from the school website. Leaders and staff implement all aspects of policy consistently.
- Senior leaders work tirelessly with parents and external agencies and address concerns about pupils' well-being immediately and comprehensively. Staff are aware of any pupils at risk and they manage interventions effectively to ensure that pupils are safe and well supported.
- Staff are trained thoroughly to identify any risks and to manage relationships effectively with external agencies that share the responsibility to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. The strength of relationships and respect between pupils and staff encourages openness and cooperation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan well for pupils' learning. Activities and tasks provided for pupils enable them to develop a good understanding of the content and concepts of the external examinations for which they are studying.
- The majority of pupils pay good attention and maintain their concentration well throughout lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants manage any occasional distraction from learning effectively and pupils' focus is quickly improved.
- Teachers provide all pupils with good opportunities to build up their knowledge and understanding gradually from their different starting points. Staff have a good awareness of the levels at which pupils are working and mostly provide tasks that require pupils to think carefully and to use their subject skills to extend their knowledge and understanding

appropriately.

- For example, in functional skills mathematics, pupils are confident in their ability to produce tally charts and to complete appropriately presented bar graphs from the results.
- All pupils make good progress, often from low starting points, across a suitable range of qualifications from entry level to level 2, including good outcomes in functional skills English and mathematics. The school has recently introduced additional, appropriate opportunities for the most able pupils to extend their learning to GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics.
- The curriculum is suitably broad to ensure that all pupils study a range of subjects, including experiences in science, technology and artistic courses. For example, pupils enjoy a range of practical experiments as they test their own understanding of forces of motion in science.
- In art, pupils are encouraged to work with different materials and to develop their skills of observation and critical analysis. Their work demonstrates an effective development of drawing skills, including use of lines, shading and texture. They enjoy using different media as they develop their work in the styles of famous artists.
- Teachers and teaching assistants understand the individual characteristics of their pupils, how to motivate them and to maintain their concentration. Staff are skilled in asking appropriate questions when working in full groups or with an individual pupil. They challenge pupils to think more deeply and to justify their answers. Pupils mostly develop a secure understanding of the technical vocabulary of the subjects they study.
- Teachers provide good guidance to pupils about how to improve their work. In line with the school's marking policy, they make appropriate suggestions about how pupils might extend and develop their answers. Pupils' responses to written comments are inconsistent but include good examples of successful improvements, for example in handwriting, sentence structure and depth of ideas.
- The majority of pupils have well-established reading skills and use these effectively to research online and to produce independent written work. Pupils enjoy learning. They sustain their concentration and respond positively to teachers' instructions.
- Teachers relate the content of the curriculum closely to pupils' needs and aspirations for the future, including chosen careers and further education. Pupils enjoy practical activities, such as analysing and demonstrating the personal protective equipment required for a variety of jobs.
- The combination of whole-class teaching and specialist GCSE provision does not ensure a consistently high level of challenge for the most able pupils. Senior leaders have identified in their development plans the need to include a more effective focus on foundation and higher-level GCSE qualifications in core subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils learn to take increasing responsibility for their actions and to appreciate the opportunity to study for qualifications that will help them move on successfully to further education and employment.
- Pupils recognise the progress that they make in developing more mature and cooperative behaviour. They appreciate the personal attention and advice received from staff; they mostly value the small size of the school and the extent to which they believe staff understand them.
- Pupils are aware of the effects of bullying and the requirement to support each other. School records demonstrate that staff take effective action when any individual pupil expresses a concern about their well-being. Overall, the school is a coherent, supportive community.
- Staff provide effective careers guidance for pupils and support them well as they plan for the transition to further education at the end of Year 11.
- The school provides a safe environment in which the welfare of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils understand the risks associated with, for example, substance misuse, gang culture, and inappropriate use of social media.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils develop a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles, including important aspects of their physical and mental health.
- Staff encourage pupils to be aware of local and national issues and help them to develop mature responses. Senior leaders are committed to the development of pupils' community awareness. They provide an increasing range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to make a contribution, for example through organising charitable fund-raising events.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils, who have been disaffected and reluctant learners, develop positive attitudes to learning. They respect the staff and are cooperative in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils mostly sustain their concentration and focus on the successful completion of their work during lessons. Their behaviour and attention is often excellent.
- On occasion, individual pupils lose concentration and become distracted. Staff ensure that this does not have a negative impact on learning. They are attentive to individual needs and provide the support and encouragement needed to enable pupils to refocus.
- The majority of pupils enter the school with previously poor and inconsistent attendance. School records demonstrate improvements in attendance by the majority of pupils. The school has thorough and systematic strategies to ensure regular attendance and to intervene when pupils are absent. A small core of persistent absentees occupies a lot of staff time and diligent work with parents and external agencies, with variable success.
- Pupils' behaviour around both sites is cooperative and responsible. Pupils mix well and

enjoy each other's company, for example during lunch breaks. They are responsive to staff instructions and expectations.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school provides strong support for disaffected pupils, assisting them to develop positive attitudes and make good progress with their learning.
- Pupils mostly enter the school with gaps in their learning and levels of attainment below the average for their age. The majority of pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve qualifications appropriate for their future careers.
- Pupils make good progress with their speaking, listening, reading and writing. They work successfully towards functional skills qualifications that provide a suitable basis for further education at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils develop the ability to apply their numeracy skills in real-life contexts. The majority make good progress towards functional skills qualifications in mathematics.
- The most recent cohort of Year 11 leavers achieved a range of functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, between entry level 3 and level 1. These mostly represent good progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, begin to close the gaps in their learning and make progress towards the standards expected for their age.
- Current pupils are making good progress towards qualifications in English, mathematics, science and art and vocational preparation up to level 2. A small number of pupils are experiencing success in GCSE courses.
- The great majority of pupils move on to positive destinations at the end of Year 11, including further education colleges or employment with training. A small number remain outside education, employment or training at the end of Year 11, largely due to significant periods of absence during key stage 4.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their starting points. However, to date, insufficient numbers of pupils have achieved the higher-level functional skills or GCSE qualifications of which they are capable.

School details

Unique reference number	135754
DfE registration number	928/6070
Inspection number	10012953

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	James Madine
Headteacher	Charlotte Barton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,675 – £14,625
Telephone number	01604 970320
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	info@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	29 April 2013
Progress monitoring inspection	13 October 2015

Information about this school

- Progress School Northampton is located in former office premises in the centre of Northampton. It was registered as an independent school in May 2008 under the name of Education and Youth Services. The proprietorship of the school moved to Progress Schools Ltd in January 2016.
- The school provides full-time education for pupils in the age range 13 to 16 years who are disengaged from education or who are at risk of exclusion from education because of

behavioural difficulties or non-attendance.

- The school is registered to admit up to 40 boys and girls. There are currently 35 pupils on the school roll.
- The school opened a second site at Thrapston in East Northamptonshire in February 2017. This was originally a temporary site to admit pupils previously in attendance at the school's Kettering site. The Kettering site is now closed.
- The school aims 'to provide high level supportive and inspirational teaching to 13 to 16 year olds at key stages 3 and 4 to ensure positive progression and readiness for the world of further education, work-based learning or employment'.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.
- The school's previous standard inspection in April 2013, and progress monitoring inspection in October 2015, took place when the school was under the proprietorship of Education and Youth Services. This is the school's first inspection under the proprietorship of Progress Schools Ltd.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in each teaching group, across the full age range of the school at both the Northampton and Thrapston sites. He scrutinised samples of pupils' work in a variety of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The inspector held discussions with the chief executive officer of the company, who is also the chair of the governing body for the school. He also discussed aspects of the school's leadership and management and implementation of policies with the headteacher, senior leaders and additional members of staff.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with a small number of parents and had discussions with groups of pupils at each site. The inspector also took account of inspection questionnaires submitted by 12 members of staff. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be available for consideration.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to consider an application from the school to make a material change in pupil numbers. The school has applied to the DfE to register the Thrapston site as a separate school and to increase the number on roll to 55 pupils across both sites.

Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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