

Progress Schools – Carlisle

7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ

Inspection date

5 December 2017

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 14

- At the previous emergency inspection, these standards were not met because leaders were not safeguarding pupils sufficiently and not promoting their welfare as effectively as they should be. This was in regard to lax supervision of pupils at breaktimes. Pupils were allowed to leave the school site without supervision several times during the day. This led to truancy and the inability to monitor pupils' behaviour off site. Additionally, leaders did not take rigorous enough action to stop pupils from smoking.
- The action plan identified robust actions to tackle pupils going off site by revoking permission to leave the school during the school day. At break and lunchtime, a rota was drawn up to ensure that pupils were supervised at all times. The timescale for these actions was prompt, within a few days of the inspection. An appropriate longer-term action had been identified to create a relaxation area for pupils to use when not in lessons. This action was intended to be in place for the start of the new academic year, September 2017.
- Immediately following the emergency inspection, leaders sent out a letter to all parents, withdrawing permission for pupils to leave the school site during the school day. At this inspection, this was seen to be enforced strictly and accepted by pupils. A daily supervision rota has been implemented and covers all appropriate times of the day and key areas of the school where supervision is needed.
- Leaders have also now developed a space for pupils to relax indoors at breaktimes. It is a small space, but includes comfy beanbags for pupils to sit on and chat or relax. The headteacher discussed with the inspector some of the ideas that pupils had offered to improve this area further, in particular to allow pupils to feel that it is their space, to give them appropriate activities to occupy them and to ensure that they have somewhere to talk to each other with greater privacy. Its scope and potential to offer pupils a sense of belonging and well-being prompted the headteacher to consider whether a bigger room would be even more suitable. Pupils say that they enjoy the space and are looking forward to personalising it and making it more 'teenage friendly'.
- Leaders commented that a positive effect of not allowing pupils out of school during the day has been the noticeable improvement in attendance. This includes the complete

removal of truancy after an attendance mark has been given, and pupils not turning up late to class. Scrutiny of attendance documentation at the time of the inspection confirms these improvements.

- Leaders were very aware that pupils did not give a good impression of themselves with local residents as a result of being unsupervised off the school premises. To address this, leaders have built into the curriculum a range of local charity activities. For example, pupils enjoyed their recent involvement in collecting food for the local foodbank. Leaders have also created a wider programme of activities to help pupils' understanding and development of compassion for others, with projects such as learning about the local impact of hurricane Ophelia. Pupils have recently researched and put together presentations about why people are homeless and what it might be like.
- Leaders have taken a more rigorous and decisive approach to smoking. A question about smoking has been built into introductory talks with parents and pupils before they start at the school. Leaders also glean information to establish the number of cigarettes a pupil smokes a day. This is then used as a target to initially reduce and ultimately stop a pupil smoking. Additionally, a parent information leaflet on smoking reflects the school's approach, and National Health Service leaflets are given out with helpful suggestions on how to stop smoking. During the inspection, pupils were involved in a well-delivered smoking awareness session. Pupils were fascinated by the harmful effects of smoking when seeing a jar of tar that represented what would be collected in the lungs after a year of smoking. Some pupils were visibly horrified. A number expressed a desire to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoked. This session is intended to be built upon with an individual meeting with each pupil and establishing a school-based smoking cessation group.
- Leaders are clearly committed to tackling the issue of smoking and care deeply about the welfare of pupils. However, they are aware that there is still much more to do. Pupils rely on smoking to keep them calm and to reduce anxiety and stress, which is a genuine issue for pupils. Yet this needs to be balanced with the school not inadvertently condoning smoking by making it acceptable and easy to do at breaktimes. Pupils themselves have come up with ideas to reduce smoking at these times. However, leaders have not yet resolved the issue of further reducing smoking at breaktimes and are still seeking suitable alternatives to smoking to occupy pupils, relieve boredom and to find other ways of coping with stress and anxiety.
- Although not identified as a standard that was not met, the previous emergency inspection report outlined that the management of low-level disruption was not dealt with as consistently and effectively as it could be.
- Leaders have now stepped up the requirements for staff to have a consistent approach to behaviour management and not to allow low-level disruption to distract the pupil or his/her peers from lessons. This has been successful. Behaviour in classrooms is managed well, with a measured approach to ensure that pupils engage and are respectful, while not constantly correcting pupils for their fidgeting or excitability. Around school, outside of lessons, pupils are boisterous but respectful and respond well to adults' corrections or instructions. The behaviour and anti-bullying policy continues to be applied appropriately. Pupils say that they do not experience bullying in school and any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly by adults. A comprehensive record of misbehaviour and sanctions is kept and regularly analysed for patterns of behaviour.

- Leaders have been quick and resolute to respond to the unmet standards identified at the previous inspection, and as a result the standards are now met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv)

- At the emergency inspection in May 2017, this standard was not met because the proprietor had not ensured that the current headteacher was not barred from taking part in the management of an independent school. Nor did the proprietor ensure that the school's single central register of pre-employment checks contained information confirming relevant professional qualifications held by members of staff.
- The action plan sets out clear, concise and appropriate actions to address the aspects of these standards that were unmet. These include redesigning the single central register (SCR), a document containing security checks on staff, to meet requirements and fulfilling the mandatory section 128 checks on the current headteacher.
- The SCR was scrutinised during this inspection. The revised SCR includes columns for the section 128 check, including date checked and by whom, and also a column checking relevant professional qualifications. All aspects of the SCR were complete, dated and compliant.
- Leaders have been conscientious in their response; the school now meets the requirements of this standard.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(b)

- At the previous emergency inspection, this standard was not met because the school did not have a suitable outdoor space to allow pupils to play outside.
- The evaluation of the school's action plan concluded that the intention to change the use of a car park area adjoining the school and redesignate it as an outside space suitable for play and seating was appropriate, as was the breakdown of actions and timescales. The work was intended to be completed by the start of the new academic year, September 2017.
- The alterations have been effectively implemented. The school now has an outdoor space to use at break and lunchtimes, although small. It is appropriately fenced, clean and tidy. Pupils were seen to use the area at each breaktime. In discussion with pupils and staff, there is an intention to complete further work to make this small fenced area as appealing as possible, perhaps adding colour or a mural to the back wall. Pupils were keen to have wooden seating and benches with umbrellas to increase its appeal further.
- Inspection evidence confirms that leaders have ensured that this standard has now been met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the previous inspection, this standard was not met because not all the required standards for independent schools were met.

- The school's action plan identified appropriate, prompt actions to ensure that the school meets all the standards that were deemed unmet at the time of the emergency inspection. This inspection confirms that the majority of the actions were met within the first week following the inspection, indicating the sincerity of leaders in addressing the issues identified.
- Leaders are knowledgeable and experienced. They are conscientious and take safeguarding very seriously. They now fulfil their responsibilities to actively promote the well-being of pupils. They recognise and are determined to continue to proactively address the welfare issues around pupils' addiction to smoking.
- Leaders now meet the requirements of this standard.
- Leaders have a suitable safeguarding policy which is available to parents. It is up to date, reviewed regularly and meets all current statutory requirements.

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 that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school (paragraphs 7, 7(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of staff (paragraph 14).
- The proprietor must ensure that anyone employed in a leadership position at the school is not barred from taking part in the leadership of an independent school (paragraphs 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii)) and that checks on the professional qualifications of members of staff are recorded on the school's register of pre-employment checks (paragraph 21(3)(a)(iv)).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils have access to a suitable outdoor space for pupils to play outside (paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities and ensure that the independent standards are consistently met (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers actively and consistently promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	135555
DfE registration number	909/6097
Inspection number	10044094

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	Secondary
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	James Madine
Headteacher	Mrs Faye Skinner
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,675–£14,625
Telephone number	01228 586004
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	faye.skinner@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	5–7 July 2016

Information about this school

- Progress Schools Ltd – Carlisle is an independent day school registered for a total of 40 male and female pupils aged 13 to 16.
- There are currently 20 pupils on roll. Five of these pupils are dual-registered with local schools or the local pupil referral unit (Gilford Centre) and two presently attend part time.
- All pupils have a history of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some have been permanently excluded from local maintained schools. Most pupils have a history of low levels of attendance. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but currently none has a statement of special educational need or an education, health and

care plan. Pupils usually have skills in mathematics and English that are below average when they enter the school.

- The school was previously part of the Education Youth Services group but was taken over by the Progress Group in January 2016. The group also offers education in seven other schools. The school building is in the city centre of Carlisle.
- As well as the headteacher, there is a proprietor, a chief executive officer and a managing director with responsibility for leadership. There are three directors of the company.
- A high proportion of pupils on roll are supported by the pupil premium.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. This was the school's first monitoring inspection.
- Following the previous unannounced inspection, carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools as a result of concerns about pupils' behaviour in the local area and concerns about safeguarding, the school was asked to prepare an action plan. This plan was approved by the Department for Education.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and spoke to the head of safeguarding and student welfare and the chief executive officer on the telephone. She met with a small group of pupils and spoke informally with school staff and pupils.
- The inspector was shown round the school premises, both inside and outside. She observed lessons and observed behaviour at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents regarding safety and safeguarding, including risk assessments, school policies and the single central record. She also examined a range of other documents, including the school's action plan, behaviour and attendance records and examples of pupils work.
- The inspector examined the school's safeguarding policy.
- The inspection was conducted without notice to the school.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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