

Progress Schools – Wirral

The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone, Bright Street, Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 4EA

Inspection dates

10–12 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have created a school which has pupils' success at the heart of all it does.
- Leaders are considered by local partners with whom they work to be professional, reflective and focused on making a positive difference to pupils' lives.
- Pupils make good progress. They are well prepared to make a fresh start at a new mainstream secondary school.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are fully met.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. The board of governors makes an important contribution to school improvement.
- The curriculum is engaging. Pupils say that teachers make learning fun. Activities are often connected to current events to add relevance and a sense of purpose for pupils.
- The enriched curriculum is a strength. Pupils benefit enormously from the excellent facilities the Youth Zone offers.
- Pupils' attendance is significantly better than at their previous schools.
- Pupils' outstanding personal development and welfare are central to the work of the school. Highly effective personal, social and emotional sessions build pupils' confidence and resilience.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils' conduct is exemplary.
- Parents, carers and pupils feel that they are very safe and cared for well.
- Teaching and learning are good. However, teachers lack the subject knowledge that would enable them to challenge the most able pupils more effectively, particularly in English.
- Teachers' questioning does not routinely support pupils to develop the depth of their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers do not consistently assess pupils' progress in different subjects as well as they assess their personal development. As a result, the information that leaders provide to target schools about pupils' academic progress sometimes lacks clarity.

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 the associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning so that teachers more confidently address pupils' individual learning needs, particularly in English and those of the most able, by:
 - increasing their subject knowledge
 - using effective questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring that pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Develop systems for assessing pupils' academic achievement to ensure that the information gathered supports pupils to make a smooth transition back into mainstream education.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor, leaders and governors have established a school that is making a positive difference to pupils' lives. As a result, Progress Schools Wirral is a good place to learn. Together with the whole staff team, leaders remove barriers to learning and create a nurturing environment where pupils feel secure and are keen to re-engage in their learning. Staff are guided by the genuine belief that every pupil deserves a second chance.
- Leaders have been reflective and adaptive in the way they have established the school. They have successfully created a place that welcomes vulnerable pupils and, in a short space of time, transforms their attitudes and personal development. As a result, pupils become ready and enthusiastic to return to mainstream education.
- The school actively promotes equality and diversity. This helps pupils to become caring, considerate, respectful and tolerant. Pupils look out for each other and are considerate of others in the wider community.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. This supports pupils to develop the attributes necessary for them to return to a mainstream secondary school.
- The wider leadership team are experienced and knowledgeable. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The detailed school development plan outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention. Leaders have developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- The proprietor, senior leaders and the board of governors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school has developed an effective system to assess pupils' attainment and progress. This has been adapted to take account of the average 12-week period pupils are in this school. It is used effectively to assess each individual pupil's needs, including those that relate to their personal and emotional development and attitudes to learning. The information gathered allows leaders to analyse pupils' progress on a weekly basis.
- Leaders and staff use the assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. However, leaders' systems for evaluating the progress that pupils make in different subjects are not as effective as those that are used to chart pupils' personal development. Consequently, the effectiveness of leaders' arrangements to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools is lessened by the lack of clarity in the information they provide to target schools about the academic progress made by pupils during their time at the school.
- Despite this weakness, leaders have established effective programmes to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools. These programmes start as soon as pupils join the school. They involve careful joint working between staff from Progress Schools and the target school, representatives of the local authority and parents, to ensure that the reintegration is planned carefully and is successful. Leaders continue to monitor pupils once they have left the school to enable them to evaluate the longer-term impact of their work on each pupil.

- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which pupils find engaging. They benefit from a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography, current affairs and those related to developing their personal, social and emotional health and well-being. Teachers often take opportunities to develop the curriculum through a current event, such as the FIFA World Cup. This draws on pupils' interests and ensures that pupils see their learning as relevant. All current pupils are in key stage 3. They study work skills and complete qualifications that will support them when they move to their new secondary school.
- The school's enrichment curriculum is a strength. The school makes full use of the exceptional facilities to which it has access in the Youth Zone. Pupils experience climbing, boxing, media technology, music, including sound recording, as well as benefiting from a fully equipped dance studio, sports hall, fitness gymnasium and roof-top football pitch. All these activities are taught by a specialist instructor. They also enjoy a range of trips and visits, most recently to Blackpool. These opportunities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all the school's activities. Pupils respond well to this approach and they contribute to the maintenance of a calm and considerate school environment. Pupils are active members of the school community. They promote the school's ethos, which synchronises with British values. Pupils learn about the wider community, raise funds for charities and learn about tolerance, respecting differences and the rule of law.
- The school does not receive any pupil premium funding nor additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, the lead for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/ or disabilities has been very effective in identifying the additional learning needs of pupils and allocating suitable support within school. As a result, this group of pupils make good progress.
- The school benefits from a close working relationship with other Progress Schools. Leaders are reflective. They apply their learning from one school across the other schools run by the company.
- Leaders have cultivated good relationships with both the local authority and with Wirral Youth Zone. Staff from these partners consider the school to be professional, flexible and driven by a desire to do what is best for their pupils.

Governance

- Governors share a whole-hearted commitment to improving pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Members of the small board of governors use the range of their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and make an active contribution to the life of the school.
- Governors know the school well and ensure that it remains compliant with all independent school standards. They support the headteacher in holding staff to account.
- Governors are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and the board of governors undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents on request. It is also available on the school's website.
- The school's pastoral support is excellent. Staff, overseen by the head of safeguarding and welfare, coordinate every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are kept safe and that their welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders and staff have worked successfully to ensure that barriers to learning are broken down. The combination of teachers' knowledge of pupils and their ability to build their self-esteem has ensured that the vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and make good progress during their time at the school.
- Teaching is characterised by friendly, warm relationships between staff and pupils. Staff model and reinforce high expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. This helps pupils to work with purpose and develop their knowledge and skills.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with motivating activities which capture their interest. Personal, social and emotional development is taught discretely, but is also woven into every aspect of learning.
- The development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills is a high priority in the school. Where possible, the school sets pupils work that links to the curriculum in their target school. For example, pupils read texts that are studied in their new school. These measures help pupils' transition to their new schools by creating continuity in their studies.
- Teachers use information from assessments to plan new learning. They involve pupils in reviewing and setting new learning targets each week.
- Teachers do not consistently provide pupils with work that is sufficiently demanding. Where this is the case, pupils are not pushed to make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case in English and for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils does not routinely deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers sometimes challenge pupils through their questioning. When this is the case, pupils are supported to make links between different areas of learning, which

deepens their understanding. Too often, however, teachers' questioning of pupils is superficial and makes a minimal contribution to the development of pupils' learning.

- In many areas of the curriculum, teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge. They draw on pupils' prior learning and often give real-life and relevant examples to explain what is being taught. Adults are skilful in maintaining pupils' focus on activities and are quick to pick up on those beginning to struggle. However, some teachers' subject knowledge is narrow in some of the subjects that they teach. This impedes their ability to respond to pupils' questions and provide pupils with a level of challenge that is appropriate for their ability. This is most evident in English, where some pupils find the work too easy.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their learning. Teachers make lessons fun and interesting. Pupils particularly like the range of activities and recognise that pursuits such as scaling the climbing wall help build their confidence and sense of achievement. Pupils are confident that their learning will help them in the future.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Staff believe that enhancing pupils' personal and emotional skills is the key to unlocking their potential and successfully rejoining a mainstream school.
- All pupils benefit from regular sessions to help them develop personally, emotionally and socially. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' self-esteem, resilience and mental health. Teachers' and other adults' deep knowledge of pupils and the strong relationships they build ensure that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment in which pupils thrive and succeed.
- Staff treat pupils with the utmost consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. As pupils explained, 'Teachers are friendly, they get you to work but are friendly about it, they care about you.' Adults constantly model respectful and caring behaviour in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils feel calmer and begin to enjoy school life.
- Diversity and difference is openly discussed and celebrated. The curriculum recently focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, triggered by the recent 'Pride' marches. Currently, pupils are studying issues relating to Black history. For example, pupils have shared their thoughts on why they feel that there has been an increase in the number of Americans with racist and White supremacist views at certain times in history.
- Pupils are keen and increasingly confident learners. Pupils told inspectors that they like the school and often compare it favourably to their previous experiences of education. They feel that they are very well looked after by adults who are 'kind' and 'always help you learn'. Pupils are unanimous in their view that they feel safe in school and that there is no bullying. When asked about how they felt about moving back into a mainstream secondary school, a typical response was, 'Yes, I'm looking forward to it. This place has helped me get ready for it. I feel better and able to cope.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well around school. They are courteous, friendly and happy to talk to their peers, adults and visitors.
- Movement around the school is carefully and sensitively managed by adults, so there is limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. At the same time, adults are mindful of giving pupils space. Pupils say that they feel more secure because of the presence of staff.
- Leaders' high expectations of how pupils should behave are modelled to pupils who are new to the school by staff and more-established pupils. Upon joining the school, pupils quickly develop strategies that help them to regulate their own behaviour and emotions. Staff are highly skilled at defusing potential disruptions.
- Behaviour logs are well maintained and regularly analysed by senior leaders and governors. It is increasingly rare for a pupil to be excluded. Leaders only issue exclusions in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- Leaders have established meticulous and effective systems for monitoring absence. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils having good attendance before reintegrating into a mainstream school. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance, and the virtues of regular attendance are regularly promoted. As a result, most pupils' attendance rapidly improves upon joining the school. Those pupils who were regularly absent from their previous schools are given particularly effective support to improve their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school currently provides short-term education for key stage 3 pupils. Therefore, it does not have assessment information on progress and attainment which can be used to compare pupils to those of a similar age nationally.
- However, leaders use the assessment information available from the school that a pupil has left. They also assess pupils when they join the school to establish their starting points. Pupils are then set very specific goals around their attitude and approach to learning, their personal, social and emotional development and their progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- Leaders have devised a good-quality assessment system which is effective in capturing the individual progress of pupils in a range of areas. It allows leaders to keep a regular check on pupils to ensure that they make sufficient progress against their targets. Pupils feel involved in this process because teachers review and set targets with them weekly. Where pupils are not making enough progress towards a target, extra support is provided immediately to get them back on track as quickly as possible.
- Most pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology against the assessment measures that leaders use. However, these assessment measures sometimes lack challenge, especially for the most able pupils. Furthermore, teachers' assessments of what pupils can do in different subjects do not consistently help them to inform target schools of the progress that pupils make while at Progress Schools Wirral.

- Although most pupils make at least the progress that leaders expect of them, a few do not achieve as well as they should. In particular, some pupils make weaker progress in English because teaching in this subject is not as strong as in other areas.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress in those areas that were barriers to learning in their previous school. For example, pupils make strong gains in their emotional development and in their ability to make positive choices about their behaviour. This helps them to prepare for their return to mainstream education.
- The school provides good careers guidance. All pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and to explore their aspirations. They are helped to make informed decisions about how to pursue their goals for the future. The curriculum ensures that pupils develop work-related skills and benefit from a range of visitors, arranged by the Youth Zone, who talk to pupils about different careers.

School details

Unique reference number	144856
DfE registration number	341/6010
Inspection number	10048615

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 school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	James Madine
Headteacher	Sion Hughes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000 per term
Telephone number	0151 705 8033
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	sion.hughes@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This small independent special school is located within the premises of a new purpose-built facility for Wirral Youth Zone. The building offers a range of additional facilities, including a climbing wall, gymnasium, sports hall and spaces for performing and creative arts.
- The school can provide full-time education for up to 35 male or female pupils, aged between 12 and 16 years. It presently caters for nine key stage 3 pupils. It provides a short-term placement for pupils who are disengaged from education, have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from education because of behavioural

difficulties or non-attendance.

- Pupils are placed at the school with the intention that they will be reintegrated into a mainstream secondary school by the end of a 12-week period.
- A few pupils have SEN and/or disabilities, but none has either a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school works solely with Wirral local authority, which is the referral route for pupils' places at the school.
- The school aims 'to provide high-level, supportive and inspirational teaching to 12- to 16-year-olds at key stages 3 and 4'. In particular, the school aims to 'prepare pupils for success in their new mainstream school'.
- The school is one of five other similar schools located across the country. Progress Schools Limited are the proprietors. As well as the headteacher, there is a chief executive officer and a managing director with responsibility for leadership. The school also has a governing board of directors.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes. They also observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They observed pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- An inspector looked at the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the head of safeguarding and student welfare, and the head of operations.
- An inspector spoke with the chief executive officer, who represented the proprietorship of the school and the governing board.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around school and discussed with a group of pupils their opinions about the school and their learning.
- Inspectors informally gathered the views of staff during the inspection.
- There were no responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. However, an inspector spoke on the telephone with a parent and the lead inspector took account of evidence gathered by the school to garner the views of parents.
- School policies and other documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence, including minutes from meetings of the management committee, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The school was inspected trialling electronic evidence gathering. Additional Ofsted personnel attended the inspection to offer technical support.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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