

Inspection of Progress Schools Wigan

Wigan Youth Zone, Parsons Walk, Wigan WN1 1RU

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy the calm atmosphere in school and the high level of support that they receive. Pupils engage well in their education because staff are welcoming and have positive relationships with pupils. Pupils are happy and feel safe at the school.

Pupils are helped to understand how they can manage their own behaviour. Some pupils are provided with effective support to address the underlying causes of their behaviour. This support helps to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils are more positive about their education and are regaining a sense of ambition for their futures. Pupils are respectful of each other's views and opinions. They do not worry about bullying because staff intervene quickly when there are any instances of such behaviour.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Although leaders want the best for pupils, they have not ensured that their high expectations are clear enough in the curriculum. The irregular and sometimes poor attendance of some pupils has a negative impact on their learning.

Leaders have ensured that there are meaningful opportunities for learning that extend beyond the classroom. For example, pupils manage their own café with funds raised being donated to charity. Other trips are planned to provide pupils with new experiences, such as visiting the seaside.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum covers all of the necessary areas of learning. However, in subjects other than English and mathematics, plans for pupils' learning across the curriculum are too variable in quality and some lack ambition.

Some subject plans do not clearly set out the essential skills and knowledge that leaders want pupils to achieve. Leaders place too much emphasis on pupils gaining qualifications rather than on them knowing and remembering more of the subjects that they study. As it stands, pupils do not remember some aspects of learning as well as they should.

Leaders have identified some weaknesses in the planned curriculum. However, their efforts to improve it have been hampered by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, by extensive changes in staffing.

Leaders ensure that reading is central to the curriculum. Pupils are able to read complex vocabulary successfully. The emphasis placed on reading is developing pupils' confidence. They are reading with greater fluency.

Teachers continually check that pupils understand their learning. Assessment information is used well to plan pupils' next steps and to identify where there are gaps in their learning.

Leaders are tackling pupils' high absence rates to ensure that they are in school and learning the curriculum. However, attendance remains low. When pupils are not in school, too much learning of the planned curriculum is missed. There are some strategies in place to enable pupils to catch up on missed learning in reading. However, this is not the case in other subjects. There is no effective support in place to help pupils make up for the time that they have lost due to absence. This means that, in many subjects, pupils develop gaps in their learning.

Pupils' attitudes towards school are improving thanks to the strong relationships that they have with staff. Staff encourage pupils with lots of positive praise. Staff also help to develop pupils' social skills. For example, pupils listen to each other's opinions through regular debates about current affairs. The pupils who spoke with inspectors said that this helps them to treat each other with respect. Any disruption to learning is handled quickly and sensitively by staff so that it does not disturb learning for others.

Leaders have systems in place to recognise any special educational needs and/or disabilities that pupils may have on entry. The disrupted start to the year regarding staffing and pupil absence means that some of these checks did not take place. Leaders have not reassured themselves that all pupils' needs have been identified. However, where these checks have taken place, leaders have been quick to provide extra support when it is needed. For example, pupils receive individualised support for any social and emotional needs.

The curriculum offers additional activities to enrich pupils' experiences and to aid their personal development. For example, leaders organise trips to help pupils to practise their social skills and to be aware of their local community. Pupils have opportunities to learn about different faiths. Leaders have ensured that there is a strong promotion of fundamental British values and equalities. They have also consulted with parents and carers to make sure that the curriculum includes relevant information on relationships and sex education.

Leaders make sure that they provide unbiased careers advice for pupils. Pupils are well informed about the academic and vocational opportunities that are available to them. Pupils have opportunities to undertake work experience to develop their mechanical or horticultural skills. The school is successful in ensuring that almost all pupils move on to some form of education, employment or training when they leave the school in Year 11.

The school is tidy and kept in a good state of repair. Leaders ensure that all relevant health and safety checks are done regularly.

The parents who inspectors spoke with, and those who responded to Ofsted's Parent View survey, were positive about the difference that the school is making to re-engage pupils. These parents value the communication that they have with staff at the school and the annual reports on pupils' achievements.

The proprietor body has clear quality assurance procedures in place. Members have acted decisively to begin to improve the quality of education in the school. Members of the proprietor body are setting a clear vision for the school's future. They challenge leaders well to ensure that this vision is being brought about. Pupils and parents are positive about the greater stability that new leaders are bringing to the school.

The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school standards are met and is effective in meeting its statutory duties. For example, leaders have an appropriate accessibility plan in place which is published on the website as required by the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor body has also ensured that the school's policies on safeguarding and relationships and sex education are published on the school website. These policies are also available on request.

Leaders and members of the proprietor body engage well with staff. Staff feel valued. They appreciate the consideration that leaders have given to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know pupils well. They are well placed to identify where pupils and their families need support or where pupils are at risk of harm. They are sensitive to the additional vulnerabilities that some pupils have and put appropriate arrangements in place to support them. Staff understand the safeguarding procedures well. They know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Leaders work well with safeguarding partners to ensure that pupils and their families have a coordinated approach to supporting them in times of need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In subjects other than English and mathematics, some of the plans for pupils' learning do not clearly set out what leaders want pupils to learn. Pupils do not remember some of the key knowledge that they need beyond that related to examination specifications. Leaders should ensure that they set out with more clarity the desired knowledge and skills that they want pupils to remember so that pupils understand more of the subjects they are taught.
- Pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that many have gaps in their learning. In some subjects, they are not helped to catch up with missed learning. Leaders should build on the progress they have made to make sure that pupils attend school more often. They should also ensure that there are more effective opportunities to help pupils to recover any learning that they have missed.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	145187
DfE registration number	359/6002
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10209160
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	James Madine
Headteacher	Susan Astley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,000 to £20,000
Telephone number	01942 914 041
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	wiganPS@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 13 September 2018

Information about this school

- There have been wholesale changes to the staffing at the school. Other than the regional headteacher, all staff are new to the school and have been appointed since the start of this academic year. The head of school has been in post for five weeks.
- The previous standard inspection took place in September 2018. The school also had a material change inspection to extend its age range in September 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the head of school, the regional headteacher and the leader for education for the proprietor body throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of all pupils' work. Inspectors also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and looked at pupils' work for some other subjects.
- The inspectors met with pupils to ask them about safeguarding. They reviewed documentation, which included the school's safeguarding policy, the register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records. They also discussed safeguarding with the headteacher and the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors looked at the school's behaviour and attendance records, observed pupils at breaktimes and discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and took account of the written responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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