

Inspection of Progress Schools - Buckinghamshire

Unit 3 - Spearmast Industrial Estate, Land End Road, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire HP12 4JG

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

There are no limits to what leaders and staff believe their pupils can dream and achieve. Progress School is a place of kindness, inclusion and support. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy.

Leaders have high expectations. This is a school where pupils come first and adults make decisions in pupils' best interests. Staff skilfully foster pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. They take the time, and the care, to get to know pupils and help them re-engage with learning.

Pupils say that prejudice and discrimination have no place here. They trust staff to address any incidents of bullying quickly. When a pupil needs help to manage how they are feeling, staff know exactly what to do. Pupils learn how to take care of their mental health and well-being. They practise mindfulness, visit the gym and go on relaxing walks to the local park. For most pupils, this is the first time in their school career that they have had the opportunity to develop their interests and fulfil their potential. One pupil shared, 'We are all equally important, no-one should make us feel scared or excluded for who we are.'

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

Leaders and the proprietor truly create a school that is 'changing lives through the power of education'. Pupils who attend Progress School all have a history of disrupted education, including exclusions and severe complex special education and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff help them build positive, healthy and trusting relationships. At Progress School, all pupils receive personalised learning support and high-quality independent careers guidance and advice. Many pupils leave with appropriate qualifications which set them on the path for future success.

Leaders have put in place a meticulously crafted curriculum. Across all subjects, pupils learn a curriculum that introduces them to a wide range of opportunities and experiences. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum in all subjects is well sequenced. It sets out clearly the important knowledge pupils need to learn and the order in which it should be delivered. The curriculum has in-built flexibility, so that pupils' needs are met effectively. For instance, in English and mathematics, lessons are continually reviewed, adapted and adjusted to pupils' education, health and care plan (EHCP) targets.

Overall, pupils look forward to lessons. There are lots of opportunities for them to discuss and develop their ideas. However, sometimes, teachers introduce new ideas or concepts too quickly. They do not check and help pupils make links in what they know already. They provide pupils with too many activities which cause confusion and slows their learning. One pupil shared, 'We really like the work we do but sometimes we get too much work in one go. We don't have time to process and think.' Leaders are addressing this.

Reading is a top priority. Leaders have created an environment that ignites pupils' love of reading. Staff introduce pupils to everyday routines of reading. For instance, reading newspapers at the start of the day, reading texts for research, finding information online or listening to stories. The curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils read a range of appropriate texts and build up their reading and comprehension skills well. Staff quickly identify and support pupils who need help to catch up. Pupils enjoy choosing a wide and diverse range of books from the well-stocked library.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They debate and discuss themes on topics including disability, gender identity and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. They talk knowledgeably about how stereotypes and prejudice create an unfair society for some groups. They use their democratic right to vote on the weekly breakfast and lunch menus. Pupils work with staff and take turns to cook fresh tasty meals every day. They grow salads and vegetables which they use in their recipes. Pupils raise funds for charities they support and make donations to the food bank.

Leaders consulted with parents about the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum. Pupils learn about making safe choices, taking care of themselves and understanding when to seek help and support.

Staff are conscientious and morale is sky high. They say that leaders are considerate of their workload. The proprietor and governing board have oversight of how well the school is doing. The school meets the independent school standards. The proprietor ensures that a suitable accessibility plan is in place which complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a rigorous culture of safeguarding. Staff are trained and receive regular updates. Staff know how to report concerns when they arise. When an incident occurs, leaders log any concerns and act on them promptly. They are tenacious in securing support where necessary, including from external safeguarding agencies. Leaders make sure that all staff are qualified to work with children.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Teachers help pupils to understand boundaries and how to identify possible problems and dangers when out in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Sometimes, teachers introduce new ideas too quickly which overloads pupils' working memory. Furthermore, they do not help pupils make links in their work.

This means that in some areas of the curriculum pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about how pupils learn best, by helping pupils make links to what they remember.

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	135604
DfE registration number	825/6040
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10202270
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	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Jamie McMahon (executive headteacher)
Annual fees	£12,730 -£32,000
Telephone number	01494 418968
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	highwycombe@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–11 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school has places for up to 65 pupils between the ages of 13 and 16 years who have severe emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.
- Almost all pupils have an EHCP. All pupils have challenging behaviours and require a high level of support. Most have had significant gaps in their education, a long history of poor school attendance and have been excluded from other schools. Some pupils have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorders and autistic spectrum disorders.
- Pupils join the school at different times and with very different abilities. Most pupils currently at the school joined in the current academic year.
- The headteacher was absent at the time of this inspection.
- At the time of this inspection the school was using one alternative provider.

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.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector considered English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE) as part of the inspection. She looked at curriculum design in these subjects, visited lessons, met with some pupils to discuss their learning and looked at their work. The inspector also met with staff.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the proprietor, the chair of the governing body, school leaders, all staff and some pupils. Telephone discussions were also held with the placing local authorities.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation including behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The inspector spoke to some parents over the telephone at the start of the second

day of the inspection. She also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and took account of the responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and documents associated with the independent school standards. The inspector reviewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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