

# Inspection of Progress Schools - Lilford Centre

The Lilford Centre, Lancaster Avenue, Tyldesley, Wigan M29 8LN

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Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Until recently, leaders' and staff's expectations for pupils at this school have been extremely low. Pupils' learning and achievement are hampered by a curriculum that lacks breadth in some areas and is poorly delivered across many subjects.

Most pupils do not attend school regularly. Many pupils are allowed to work from home, over lengthy periods, without any valid justification. They do not get the support and encouragement that they need to reengage with education.

Recently, staff have established higher expectations for pupils' behaviour. Many pupils cooperate well with staff. Nonetheless, some pupils' behaviour is more challenging. Staff sometimes find this challenging behaviour difficult to manage.

In the main, pupils told inspectors that they trust staff to keep them safe. The pupils who shared their views were confident in the staff's approach to dealing with incidents of bullying.

Leaders do not carefully consider the safety of pupils who attend school on a part-time basis. At times, when these pupils are working from home, their safety is left too much to chance.

Many pupils enjoy social times with staff and other pupils. They appreciate the opportunities that they have to read and talk about what is happening in the world.

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

Leaders, including the proprietor, have not ensured that pupils receive an adequate or appropriately supervised education. A long-standing culture of low expectations among staff and leaders has prevailed for too long. Weaknesses in the leadership and management of pupils' education, attendance and welfare mean that the school does not meet many of the independent school standards (the standards). The proprietor has been too slow to identify these endemic weaknesses. Recent attempts to improve the education on offer have been significantly impeded by considerable leadership and staff changes over the last year.

Recently appointed leaders and staff are committed to identifying and tackling the considerable shortcomings at the school. However, they have had limited time to improve the serious deficiencies in the experiences that pupils receive. Furthermore, leaders and staff will have to rely heavily on additional support to bring about much needed change. Leaders are not demonstrating the knowledge required to successfully fulfil the requirements of part 8 of the standards.

Leaders have failed to ensure that all pupils have access to an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils do not get sufficient experiences to acquire aesthetic and creative knowledge as they progress through the curriculum. Many pupils do not benefit from a full-time curriculum. Approximately half of the pupils on

roll work at home, without guidance or support, for a significant proportion of the week.

Despite not providing a sufficiently broad range of academic opportunities, leaders ensure that the content of individual subject curriculums is suitably ambitious for pupils. However, there is a lack of clarity about the knowledge that pupils should learn. This means that teachers do not understand what they should teach pupils and when this learning should take place.

Teachers deliver many subjects, often working outside of their areas of expertise and specialisms. They have little knowledge, skills or previous experience in teaching many of these subjects. Despite this, they have not received any subject specific or general training to enhance their subject knowledge or support their practice. They are ill equipped to deliver the curriculum in these subjects. This means that pupils' learning is ad-hoc. They are not able to build up or deepen their knowledge over a series of lessons or from year to year. This contributes to pupils' weak achievement over time.

Teachers' choice of lesson content is poor. It is rarely suitably demanding. Teachers are often too focused on asking pupils to complete simple activities. Teachers do not use these activities effectively to help pupils know and remember more. Assessment systems make little difference to pupils' learning over time. Teachers check what pupils can do. However, these checks do not help teachers to spot the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge.

Leaders do not adequately identify the considerable, and sometimes extensive, gaps that many pupils have in their reading knowledge. This means that pupils do not get the additional support that they need to strengthen their reading. Furthermore, leaders do not make sure that teachers get the information and guidance that they need to support pupils' reading effectively. This impedes how well pupils can access other parts of the curriculum.

Leaders carefully consider an appropriate range of information to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Specialist staff who have experience of supporting pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), provide helpful additional support. Staff confidently support pupils' SEMH needs in lessons to help them focus on their learning. This usually ensures that pupils' conduct in lessons is appropriate. That said, staff are much less skilled at supporting pupils with SEND to access and remember the subject content of the curriculum. Staff do not have the information that they need about what pupils should learn to meet pupils' academic needs.

Leaders do not make judicious use of alternative provision. They do not check closely enough whether chosen alternative providers are registered schools. Furthermore, leaders do not carefully consider the context of pupils with SEND when selecting alternative provision. Consequently, leaders make inappropriate use of unregistered provision to provide substantial chunks of education for some pupils

with SEND. That said, leaders' checks on pupils' attendance and safety at alternative provision are appropriate.

Leaders, including the proprietor, do not have effective systems to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education. Recent monitoring of curriculum delivery is beginning to provide teachers with helpful guidance about how to manage behaviour in lessons. However, these checks do not pay enough attention to how well teachers are helping pupils to know and remember more. Consequently, the advice and guidance that teachers receive does not help them to strengthen their teaching practice.

Pupils' rates of attendance are unacceptable. Less than one third of pupils are in school on most days. The attendance of many pupils has declined since they joined the school. More recently, leaders have begun to better challenge and support these concerning rates of attendance. However, these actions have not made enough difference to the poor attendance rates of many pupils.

Pupils benefit from personal development lessons that support their understanding of relationships, sex and health as well as their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. That said, teachers are also not sufficiently well trained to deliver this specialist content consistently well.

Pupils profit from some helpful lessons about their next steps in education, employment and training. However, these sessions are mixed in breadth and quality. Additionally, pupils do not get all of the opportunities that they need to explore their potential future career or to prepare them for their next steps in their lives. For example, pupils are not provided with independent careers advice and guidance. Pupils access to work experience or workplaces is uneven. This means that leaders are further failing to fulfil all of the requirements of paragraph 2 in part 1 of the standards.

Staff feel that leaders are approachable. Staff told inspectors that leaders listen to them and do what they can to support their workload and well-being. Staff are positive about the actions that leaders take when staff need support.

Leaders ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to promote equality. They ensure that a suitable accessibility plan supports these arrangements. Pupils and staff feel that they get fair and consistent experiences at the school.

Leaders ensure that a suitable safeguarding policy is published on their website.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

About half of the pupils on roll receive a part-time education. Many of these pupils spend approximately half of their school week working unsupervised from home. Leaders' periodic checks and calls to home only provide temporary assurances about

pupils' location and safety. Under these current practices, leaders cannot reasonably assure themselves that these pupils are safe. This means that leaders are not fulfilling some of the requirements of part 3 of the standards.

In much of their work, leaders are well guided by the appropriate safeguarding practices outlined in their policy. Leaders ensure that pupils who attend school are taught about staying safe. Staff provide additional discussion forums for individual pupils to talk about what is happening in their lives. Staff use these opportunities to appropriately guide pupils about how to stay safe.

Staff are well trained about safeguarding. They identify concerns about pupils well. Staff use internal and external support from a wide range of relevant safeguarding partners to support pupils effectively.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Leaders do not make sure that all pupils get an appropriate full-time curriculum. This means that many pupils work unsupervised from home for large parts of the week. Leaders cannot reasonably ensure that these pupils are safe or be assured that these pupils are learning as well as they should. Leaders should rapidly ensure that all pupils are provided with full-time supervised education that better ensures their safety, welfare and education.
- Many pupils do not access large parts of the intended curriculum. Additionally, the intended curriculum for many pupils is not suitably broad and balanced. Some pupils do not benefit from the full range of curriculum experiences set out in the standards. Leaders should make sure that all pupils get access to a sufficiently broad and balanced education that meets their full entitlement.
- Leaders have not identified the knowledge that pupils should learn in the subjects that they are studying. This means that teachers are unclear about what should be taught or when this should be learned. This impedes how well teachers support pupils, including those with SEND, to know and remember more. Leaders should make sure that curriculum thinking and delivery is focused on the important knowledge that pupils should learn. They should ensure that staff carefully design assessment strategies that identify gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Teachers are not adequately supported to deliver parts of the curriculum that are outside their subject specialisms. This means that they have poor subject and pedagogical knowledge in many of the subjects they are asked to teach. This hampers pupils' achievement. Leaders should make sure that teachers are appropriately supported to develop their knowledge and practice in all of the subjects they are asked to deliver.
- Leaders and staff do not identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. This means that pupils do not get the support that they need to read accurately and confidently. For many pupils, this hinders how well they can access subject curriculums. Leaders should make sure that gaps in pupils' reading knowledge are better identified and used to inform the support that pupils receive. They should

ensure that staff are suitably equipped with the knowledge and skills that they need to support pupils' reading in lessons.

- Leaders have not done enough to support and challenge a culture of poor attendance. The number of pupils with extremely low attendance is unacceptable. These pupils are missing out on their education. Leaders should raise their expectations for pupils' attendance. They should further strengthen their approaches to challenging and supporting pupils' attendance.
- Pupils do not get the full range of experiences that they need to prepare them for their future choices about their education, employment or training. Consequently, pupils do not know what they need to do to realise their aspirations. Leaders should make sure that pupils get access to the independent careers advice that they need to make well informed choices about their next steps.
- Leaders' checks on the quality with which the curriculum is delivered are not effective. This means that teachers do not get the guidance that they need to strengthen their subject and pedagogical knowledge. This hinders how well teachers can improve their practice. Leaders should make sure that checks on the quality of curriculum delivery are appropriately focused on how well teachers are helping pupils to know and remember more.
- Leaders make inappropriate use of alternative provision to support the learning of pupils with SEND. This hampers their academic success. Leaders must make sure that alternative provision is used appropriately and with full consideration of pupils' specific needs.

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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148070
<b>DfE registration number</b>	359/6005
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10203856
<b>Type of school</b>	Other Independent School
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	nine to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	30
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	15
<b>Proprietor</b>	Progress Schools Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Charlotte Barton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Foxtton
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£20,000 to £38,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 929965
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.progress-schools.co.uk">www.progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@progress-schools.co.uk">info@progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 18 September 2020.
- A new head of school joined the school in January 2022. A new regional headteacher took up post in April 2022.
- The school operates from one purposely modified site in Wigan.
- Pupils usually join the school with significant gaps in their learning. Many pupils have previously disengaged with education due to non-attendance or behavioural issues at their previous school.
- The majority of pupils have social, emotional or mental health needs. Most pupils, but not all, have education and health care plans.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provider to provide part-time education for a small number of pupils with SEND.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no primary-aged pupils on roll.

## 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 has failed to meet 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- This was the school's first standard inspection.
- Inspectors met with the regional headteacher, head of school and other leaders. They met with representatives of the proprietor group and a representative of the local authority of Wigan
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and information technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and looked at the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals. They met with leaders who have overall responsibility for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.



- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for SEND and reading. They also looked at information about the support for pupils who have additional needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted Parent View for inspectors to consider. Inspectors took account of the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.
- Throughout all inspection activities, the inspectors gathered evidence about whether the school meets the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

Michael Pennington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynne Selkirk

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
  - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
    - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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