

Progress Schools – Thrapston

Cedar Drive, Thrapston, Northampton NN14 4LZ

Inspection date

12 October 2022

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(h), 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d)

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not thought carefully enough about the curriculum. They had not identified precisely what they wanted pupils to learn or when they should learn it.
- Leaders had not ensured that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were met effectively. Systems to identify pupils with SEND were not fit for purpose. Leaders and teachers did not pay sufficient attention to the targets outlined on these pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Leaders had not prioritised reading. Pupils who struggled to read did not get the right support. More confident readers were not encouraged to read often and widely.
- Some staff did not have the specialist knowledge they needed to deliver the curriculum.
- Pupils did not gain the knowledge that they could have.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed a new curriculum with the aim of providing five different pathways for pupils to access their learning. Each pathway enables pupils to gain a range of qualifications in different subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders have developed subject curriculums that identify key knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn and when. Subject curriculums are planned to build learning over time. However, leaders have not ensured that the planned curriculum is implemented effectively.
- Leaders are beginning to prioritise reading by encouraging pupils to read. Leaders do not have a secure way of checking pupils' progress in reading. Leaders are unable to determine the support that pupils need to improve their reading. Leaders have not established how they will support pupils who are at an early stage of reading.

- Leaders do not give teachers clear guidance as to how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders have not fulfilled their intention to create individual education plans for each pupil. Pupils' educational needs are not being met.
- Teachers do not employ effective teaching methods and activities. Class time is not well managed. Lessons are not delivered coherently.
- The pupils' experiences in lessons contribute weakly to their learning. Pupils do not have meaningful opportunities to learn. Pupils do not recall their learning. Some do not recall learning any science, for example.
- Pupils do not gain knowledge or deepen their understanding. They do not develop skills as well as they could.
- Too many pupils do not access any of the school's curriculum. Leaders do not know whether pupils who do not attend school are learning through the school's approach to remote education.
- Leaders have not established effective ways to check whether the curriculum is being delivered effectively. They do not have effective ways to check what pupils are learning.
- Leaders believe that the school is unable to meet the learning needs of a significant proportion of pupils.
- The previously unmet standards in this part remain unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At the previous inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements were secure. There were weaknesses in leaders' safeguarding practices and procedures that left pupils potentially unsafe.
- Senior leaders ensure that safer recruitment practices are in place. All pre-employment checks are undertaken before an adult starts working with pupils. These checks are recorded on the school's single central record.
- The school's safeguarding policy, which was uploaded to the school's website on the day of the inspection, is up to date. It takes into account the government's current requirements.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is implemented consistently. Some of the school's safeguarding records, for example, are ambiguous. They lack the necessary accuracy to record safeguarding concerns. Furthermore, at times, leaders have not passed on safeguarding-related information to all appropriate external agencies when they have safeguarding information to share. This means that pupils are potentially unsafe.

Paragraph 9, 9(b)

- At the previous inspection, inspectors evaluated that leaders were not ensuring that staff implemented the school's behaviour policy effectively. Inspectors found that too many pupils behaved in a way that was unacceptable and disruptive. Exclusions for poor

conduct were increasing. Poor behaviour and low attendance were contributing to pupils falling further behind in their learning.

- Pupils' behaviour is still poor. Staff do not implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. Leaders do not undertake clear analysis of behaviour over time. Exclusions remain high. The school's approaches do not lead to sustained improvements in behaviour.
- Pupils' overall attendance is poor. Too many are regularly absent. Some pupils do not attend at all. Leaders have not been effective in improving attendance.

Paragraph 15

- At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors evaluated that leaders appropriately maintained attendance registers.
- Since the previous inspection, however, leaders have failed to maintain attendance registers accurately. Some pupils' absence, for example, has been recorded as authorised when this was not necessarily the case. Leaders, then, are not maintaining attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This standard, which was judged as met at the previous inspection, is now unmet.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not made sure that risk assessments were in place for individual pupils who needed them. They did not review pupils' risk assessments routinely to check that these were still appropriate. This left these pupils potentially at risk.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed their approach to risk assessment. However, the school's risk assessment policy is not fit for purpose. It does not give clear guidance to staff regarding the completion of risk assessments, including how to identify and reduce possible risks.
- Leaders do not implement the risk assessment policy effectively. The policy states that each pupil should have a regularly updated risk assessment. Many pupils do not have a risk assessment. This potentially leaves pupils at risk.
- Those risk assessments that are in place vary in quality. Not all are sufficiently precise to ensure that staff have the necessary information to be able to support pupils, including in managing and reducing possible risky behaviours.
- The previously unmet standards in this part remain unmet. Additionally, the standard related to attendance and admission registers is now unmet.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the previous inspection, it was found that the proprietor was poorly informed about some aspects of the school, including the quality of the curriculum and the provision for pupils with SEND. The proprietor's priorities for improvement did not focus on the key areas that needed to improve. The proprietor had not ensured that the school met all

the independent school standards. The proprietor had not met their legal duty to keep pupils safe.

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has sought to appoint new school leaders. There has been significant change in the leadership of the school. Some of these appointees are yet to start working at the school. A substantive head of school has not yet been appointed. The leadership structure is in a state of flux and is not stable. Currently, there is little capacity for sustained improvement.
- Leaders have an overly positive view of the school's provision. They have not developed an effective school development plan.
- Leaders know that the school lacks a clear and coherent vision. Leaders know that they are unable to provide effective educational provision for a significant number of pupils.
- The proprietors and leaders do not demonstrate good knowledge and skills to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. Previously unmet standards continue to be unmet. The standard related to attendance and admissions, judged to be met at the previous inspection, is now unmet.
- The previously unmet standards in this part remain unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	147697
DfE registration number	940/6011
Inspection number	10252302

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 status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Jade Gibson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,500 to £32,500
Telephone number	01832 777 089
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	thrapstonPS@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Information about this school

- Progress Schools – Thrapston is an independent school situated in Thrapston, Northamptonshire NN14 4LZ.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 15 to 17 March 2022 and the school received an overall judgement of inadequate.
- Since the previous inspection, many changes have occurred in the school's leadership. New leaders have been appointed, including the director of education and the headteacher. These appointees are yet to take up their posts. At the time of the progress

monitoring inspection, the headteacher was absent from school. The school does not currently have a substantive head of school. This post is being covered by an interim head of school.

- Since the previous inspection, the chair of the proprietors has changed.
- The school offers education to pupils with behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 60 pupils aged 11 to 16 years. There are currently 32 pupils on roll.
- The school uses the services of two unregistered alternative providers.

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.
- Following the most recent standard inspection in March 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare an action plan. Ofsted evaluated the plan in July 2022. The DfE judged the plan to be unacceptable.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- The inspector met with the interim managing director of the proprietor board. The inspector met with company officers, including the safeguarding leader. The inspector met with the interim head of school.
- The inspector visited lessons. He spoke with a group of pupils.
- The inspector considered a wide range of documents, including the school's most recent action plan, the school's curriculum policy, curriculum plans and safeguarding documents. The inspector reviewed behaviour and attendance information.

Inspection team

Chris Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

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(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(h) that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- 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(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time; and
 - 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.

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
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection and that were unmet at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

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