

Inspection of Progress Schools - Toxteth

115 Upper Warwick Street, Liverpool L8 8HD

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have failed pupils at this school. Their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are low. Pupils are not inspired to learn. The curriculum offer is poor. Added to this, some pupils take qualifications that are well below their capabilities. Pupils do not achieve well. They are ill-equipped for the next stage in their education.

Many pupils do not attend school regularly. Leaders do not follow up on pupils' absence. They do not meticulously check on pupils' safety and well-being when they are absent from school. This leaves pupils vulnerable and at considerable risk of harm.

Pupils who attend school appreciate the care and support that they receive from staff. Staff know pupils well. Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They trust adults to deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Unfortunately, staff do not demonstrate the same level of care for those pupils who do not attend school regularly. Not all pupils are happy at this school.

Staff expect pupils to behave well. Pupils said that staff help them to manage their social, emotional and mental health needs sensitively.

Pupils enjoy current affairs sessions where they discuss important topical issues, for example knife crime and gang violence. While pupils are respectful of the differences between people, they are not taught about a range of faiths and cultures. This does not prepare them well enough for life in modern Britain.

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

Leaders, including the proprietor body, have overseen a decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection. They have been too slow to remedy the considerable weaknesses in the curriculum.

Pupils have not benefited from a high-quality curriculum. On the surface, the curriculum appears to be broad and balanced. However, it lacks ambition in many subjects. Leaders have not ensured that pupils learn the knowledge they need to prepare them well for their future lives. In many cases, pupils are unnecessarily repeating the knowledge that they would have learned in primary school. This dampens pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils do not learn well.

Many teachers are not subject specialists. They lack the subject expertise that they need to help pupils gain a rich and relevant body of knowledge. Furthermore, leaders have not ensured that teachers are well equipped to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils struggle to keep up or they quickly lose interest. This is because teachers do not consider pupils' prior knowledge and their reading ability when they design activities.

Leaders' approaches to assessing how well pupils are learning are ineffective. Teachers do not help pupils to remember important knowledge. Staff do not know how to recognise and address pupils' misconceptions or gaps in their learning. Pupils do not recall much of what they have been taught beyond isolated facts.

By the end of Year 11, many pupils do not achieve the qualifications that they need to realise their aspirations. This is because many follow courses that are below their academic abilities. While most pupils move on to training or further education, the courses that they follow do not necessarily match their ambitions or interests. This is because they have underachieved in key stage 4.

Leaders have no clear or effective strategy to help pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Teachers do not identify or address pupils' weaknesses in reading. Staff lack the expertise to help pupils make up the gaps in their reading knowledge. A lack of proficiency in reading is a key barrier to some pupils' achievement. These pupils cannot read well enough to access the wider curriculum.

Some pupils are placed in unregistered alternative provision. Leaders do not carry out appropriate checks to reassure themselves that these provisions are suitable for the pupils that they are placing there. Leaders do not share with these alternative providers important information about the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This impedes these providers from helping pupils to get the most out of the provision. These pupils get a poor deal.

When pupils are in school, they typically behave well. This means that pupils can usually get on with their learning. However, despite improvements to their rates of attendance when they join Progress Schools, some pupils remain persistently absent from school. Leaders do not engage with pupils and their families to ensure that absent pupils are safe. The curriculum that these pupils, and those pupils who are on part-time timetables, receive when they are at home is inadequate.

Leaders have given some thought to pupils' personal development. They provide sessions to help pupils develop their social, moral, cultural and spiritual understanding. The current affairs and personal, social and health education programmes, along with charity work and fundraising, help pupils to recognise their responsibilities towards each other, towards society and to themselves. However, pupils do not learn enough about the cultures, religions and communities that make up modern Britain. This leaves some of them ill-prepared to take their place in a diverse society.

Leaders have strengthened the careers provision for pupils. Pupils receive more impartial careers advice and guidance than they did in the past. Some pupils have undertaken suitable work experience.

Leaders have recently attempted to reduce staff's workload. Teachers appreciate leaders' support for their well-being.

The proprietor body is ineffective. Despite recent decisive actions, it has not ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) are consistently and securely met. The proprietor body has not carried out all of its statutory obligations. It has not held leaders sufficiently to account for the poor quality of education that pupils receive, nor has it ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The proprietor body has not demonstrated the capacity to improve the school given the decline in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection.

The proprietor body has implemented the statutory guidance on relationships, sex and health education. It has made sure that pupils are given age-appropriate information.

The proprietor body has ensured that there is an accessibility plan that meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders, including the proprietor body, have not ensured a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders do not ensure that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented as intended. While leaders are aware of the risks that pupils may face, they do not take appropriate or timely action to reduce those risks.

Leaders do not carry out suitable checks to ensure that pupils who attend alternative provision are safe. For example, there are no safeguarding risk assessments in place. In addition, leaders' checks to establish whether pupils who are absent are safe are equally ineffective. Consequently, pupils who do not attend school or who are in alternative provision are at risk of not being safe.

In contrast, leaders' approach to safeguarding those pupils who attend school regularly is much better. For this group, leaders identify those pupils at risk of harm. They ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support from external professionals, when required.

Pupils who attend school are provided with appropriate guidance to help them keep themselves safe, including when online.

The school's safeguarding policy is suitable and meets statutory requirements. This policy is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is unambitious. It does not take account of pupils' needs, interests or prior learning. Pupils do not learn the knowledge that they need to make a successful start in the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is designed so that pupils achieve well and are able to fulfil their aspirations for the future.

- Too many pupils follow courses that are below their academic abilities. Many pupils move on to training or further education courses that do not necessarily match their ambitions or capabilities. Leaders must ensure that pupils are able to study for appropriate qualifications.
- Leaders have not made sure that teachers have the expertise to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils do not achieve well. Leaders must ensure that staff understand how to design learning that enables pupils with SEND to achieve well over time.
- Teachers do not systematically and effectively check that pupils have learned what was intended. This means that pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and fail to recall the essential knowledge that they need to be successful in the subjects that they are studying. Leaders must ensure that teachers know what pupils must learn. Leaders must then ensure that teachers take effective steps to check that pupils have gained this knowledge over time.
- Leaders do not ensure that staff identify the specific gaps in pupils' reading knowledge when they start at the school. Added to which, teachers do not have the knowledge to support pupils who find reading more difficult. This means that pupils are not provided with timely and effective support to learn to read fluently and accurately. Leaders should make sure that pupils' reading knowledge is better understood by staff. This is so that pupils receive the timely support that they need to catch up with their reading. Leaders should make sure that teachers have the right training in early reading so that they can help pupils learn to read more effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils gain sufficient knowledge and appreciation of the faiths, cultures and communities that make up modern Britain. This means that pupils are not adequately prepared for life in modern society. Leaders must ensure that there is a strong programme to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of different religions and communities.
- Leaders' efforts to encourage pupils to attend school are not as effective as they could be. Although pupils' rates of attendance improve when they start at the school, some pupils continue to miss days of learning. Leaders must refine their approaches to improving pupils' attendance. This is so that those pupils who are persistently absent attend school more regularly.
- Leaders do not check sufficiently that pupils who are not in school, including those on part-time timetables, are safe and that they are completing their learning. This leaves pupils at risk from potential harm and of not benefiting from the education to which they are entitled. Leaders must ensure that they follow their school policies by carrying out rigorous, regular checks on these pupils. This is so that they can assure themselves that these pupils are safe and that they continue to learn the curriculum.
- Leaders do not carry out sufficient safeguarding due diligence on the alternative provisions that they use. They do not carry out appropriate risk assessments to safeguard the pupils placed in these provisions. They do not share with these

providers the specific needs of the pupils on placement. This means that pupils may be put at risk and not receive the support that they should. Leaders must ensure that they increase their knowledge and oversight of the alternative provision that they use. They must establish clear lines of communication so that pupils' needs are fully explained and met.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	143912
DfE registration number	341/6008
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10243493
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Elaine Delahunt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£11,000 to £31,500
Telephone number	0151 541 1967
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	liverpool@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 May 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the proprietor body has been appointed.
- The previous standard inspection took place from 15 to 17 May 2018.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The proprietor body provides a breakfast club for its pupils.

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 that 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.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the proprietor body, the proprietor body's regional headteacher, the head of school and the proprietor body's national safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, art and design, and physical education. 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculums in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation. They met with the proprietor body's safeguarding leader and the designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils about the safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. They also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff. They considered staff responses to Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors met with pupils. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey.
- There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amanda Downing

His Majesty's 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(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 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;
 - 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;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;

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.
- 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.

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