

Inspection of Progress Schools – Carlisle

7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ

Inspection dates:

25 to 27 April 2023

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?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe in this school. They know that adults will listen to them and support them when they need additional help. Pupils also have the time and space to share any concerns that they may have with staff. Many pupils were disengaged from education prior to joining this school. Typically, they said that they are much happier at Progress Schools and can see the value of committing to their education.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. They deal with any incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Pupils develop a secure understanding of what is acceptable behaviour in school, and in the community, and what is not. They try their hardest to follow school routines. Furthermore, most pupils respond positively to the support that staff provide to engage them in their learning. By the end of key stage 4, most pupils achieve the qualifications that they need to be prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils value the opportunities that they have to visit places in the local community. For example, they visited an animal sanctuary and helped to clean out the stables and feed some of the animals. Pupils have also visited a cathedral and the Knife Angel sculpture. They enjoy visits to the local sports centre, the gym and the golf driving range. These varied experiences not only support a healthy lifestyle, but they also help pupils to develop confidence, self-esteem, resilience and teamwork skills.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They have thought about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to acquire and the order in which they should learn it. However, they have not ensured that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those in key stage 3. Some pupils do not have the prior knowledge that they need to learn the knowledge outlined in leaders' curriculum. This means that pupils do not build knowledge over time as deeply as they should.

Leaders have not ensured that teachers have sufficient subject knowledge and expertise to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. In some subjects, teachers do not address the gaps in pupils' learning and any misconceptions that pupils may have before moving on to new learning. They do not use assessment information as effectively as they should to shape future teaching. This means that some pupils are not able to successfully learn or remember some elements of the curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading. As many pupils do not read widely and often outside of school, leaders have successfully developed a link with the local library and have sourced a range of books to create a school library. They have also included additional reading time on the timetable. Leaders correctly identify gaps in pupils' reading knowledge, including comprehension and phonics knowledge. However, leaders have not provided sufficient training for staff to deliver effective

support to struggling readers. This hinders how well these pupils catch up to become confident and fluent readers. They have also not ensured that some of the books that pupils read match their reading knowledge.

Many pupils have a history of negative behaviour and poor attendance in previous settings. Staff work well to support them to re-engage with education. Most pupils take this opportunity. They learn strategies to help them to better manage their feelings and emotions. Pupils attend school more regularly than they have done previously. However, at times, some pupils' refusal to complete tasks can interrupt lessons. This can impact on how much learning takes place. Leaders are working to address this concern.

Leaders have designed a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum. This is tailored to meet the specific needs of pupils and helps to prepare them for adulthood. Many pupils engage in the monthly pupil forums. During this time, they share and debate their ideas of how they can improve their experiences in school. They learn to listen to each other and to respect and appreciate opinions that are different from their own.

Pupils also have the opportunity to contribute positively to their community. They have prepared packs of essential items for Ukrainian families living in the area. They have also participated in a 'give-a-day' project with a local church and contributed by painting a fence in the community. These experiences help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and purpose.

Pupils access a wide range of impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance. Some pupils complete work placements, attend college taster sessions and visit careers fairs. They learn how to write a curriculum vitae and they participate in mock interviews. Most pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. For example, the vast majority of pupils are successful in securing a place in post-16 provision.

The proprietor body has not ensured that the independent school standards (the standards) are consistently and securely met. Leaders have failed to ensure that the standards about the quality of education provided at the school have been met.

The proprietor body has ensured that there is a system in place to support and challenge school leaders. The chair of the proprietor body is also the chair of governors. The governors and national leaders working for the proprietor body have a wide and rich set of skills. They provide support for school leaders. However, this is limited in its effectiveness. This is because most of the support is provided remotely. Leaders are aware of this issue. Consequently, they are ensuring that they provide extra capacity to the school to develop the curriculum and to provide effective support to staff. This is so that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, moving forward.

Leaders have ensured that they follow health and safety requirements, including fire regulations and risk assessments. Classrooms are bright, clean and well resourced. Policies are made available to parents and carers on the school's website and also on request.

Leaders have ensured that the school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders have prioritised the workload and well-being of staff. They are aware that the staff team is very small in number and they are taking steps to increase capacity.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is an effective safeguarding policy that includes the current government requirements. The policy is published on the website and is available on request.

Leaders have ensured that staff have the training that they need to identify the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders are aware of the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities of the school's pupils. They also factor local safeguarding issues into their training for staff. Leaders secure help for pupils in a timely way. They provide effective help in school and work well with other agencies to access additional support, when required.

Leaders have established a clear system for reporting and recording any concerns that staff may have. Leaders act on these concerns swiftly. Pupils are also taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. For example, leaders have worked with the police, drug and alcohol services and the sexual health team to deliver workshops to help pupils to understand risk-taking behaviour and how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, leaders have not constructed a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, including those in key stage 3. The curriculum in these subjects has not been designed to build on pupils' prior knowledge. This means that some pupils do not build knowledge as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum takes into account the varying starting points of all pupils and allows them to build knowledge well over time.
- In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that staff receive the support that they need to deliver and adapt the curriculum well. This means that pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they should in these subjects. Leaders should

further refine the support and training given to staff by national leaders so that staff can deliver the curriculum confidently and effectively.

- In some subjects, leaders have not ensured that staff have sufficient expertise to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that pupils do not have secure prior knowledge before moving on to new learning. Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment information to inform future teaching.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff address the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge quickly or effectively. This means that some pupils are not confident and fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that staff have the training that they need to help pupils to catch up quickly with their reading knowledge.

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	135555
DfE registration number	942/6097
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10267644
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	None
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Abigail Crooks
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,500 to £32,000
Telephone number	01228 586004
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	info@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 February 2019

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was from 26 to 28 February 2019.
- The school is located at 7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ.
- The school provides short- and longer-term placements for pupils who are disengaged from education, have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from education.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

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 of 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 spoke with the headteacher and also spoke with staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors. The chair of governors is also the managing director of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to the independent school standards, the curriculum, school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff to check how well they understood safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses from the Ofsted survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences in school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime, in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and physical education. They met subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. They also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector had a tour of the school premises.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

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(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.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 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(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 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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