

Progress Schools - Northamptonshire

8 Notre Dame Mews, Northampton NN1 2BG

Inspection date

18 October 2023

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) to 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(i), 3, 3(a), 3(d)

- At the previous progress monitoring inspection, pupils were not receiving an appropriately ambitious curriculum. While some curriculums had been developed, there were not complete plans in place for all subjects. It was often not clear how the planned curriculums in each subject would build pupils' knowledge over time.
- At that time, curriculums that were planned did not consider pupils' different needs. Assessment was not used to help identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and to plan future learning. There was no precise thinking about how the curriculum should be adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
- Pupils' experiences in lessons contributed weakly to their learning. Lessons were chaotic and disrupted by uncooperative and poor behaviour. Pupils did not gain knowledge, deepen their understanding or develop skills as well as they could.
- The curriculum for reading was in the very early stages of being developed. There was not a programme in place to support pupils in the early stages of learning to read.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed a more ambitious curriculum that has been designed to better meet the needs of all pupils. There are now three curriculum pathways: 'Build'; 'Grow'; and 'Launch'. The 'Launch' pathway contains a mathematics, science and English curriculum that exposes pupils to content that better prepares them for GCSE examinations. The pathway also contains a more carefully planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum split into six units, including 'My World' and 'My Body'. The other pathways have curriculums that have been adapted to be suitable for those working at key stage 3 and upper key stage 2 levels.
- Despite their intention to create a curriculum that caters for pupils' needs, leaders have not precisely identified what pupils should know and remember from each lesson. This lack of appropriate identification of what should be taught and when has led to inconsistent implementation of the curriculum. For example, staff have selected the content that they have felt is important for pupils to learn. This has led to only disjointed

parts of the planned curriculum being delivered. This learning does not link to prior learning and does not enable pupils to build on what they have already learned. Leaders are unsure why staff have chosen these aspects of the curriculum.

- Staff do not make clear to pupils the important knowledge that they should be learning. They do not use assessment well enough to identify and resolve gaps in pupils' knowledge. Staff continue not to use assessment to plan future learning.
- Weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum mean that pupils do not develop their knowledge and skills over time.
- The three 'pathways' model has yet to ensure that all pupils' needs are met. Pupils with SEND who are on the 'Build' and 'Grow' pathways complete the same work as those on the 'Launch' pathway. Such work is not appropriate to their needs. As a result, these pupils do not always understand what they are doing.
- Pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment have not been taken into account in the planning of lessons. Not all needs outlined in pupils' EHC plans are fully met. While individual education plans are now complete and provide targets that are specific to the individual pupils, they do not provide staff with guidance to help them know exactly how best to support the pupils in their learning.
- Previously, pupils experienced a disrupted learning environment. This has improved. There is now a calm environment that enables pupils to learn.
- Leaders have started making reading more of a priority. There are now 'reading for pleasure' slots in the timetable. The English curriculum contains a wide range of texts and has a sharp focus on developing vocabulary. However, the programme in place to support pupils in the early stages of learning to read is still in development. There is no standardised approach used to assess pupils' reading accuracy as well as their fluency. Not all staff who support pupils with their reading have been trained in how to provide consistent and effective support to those who may still have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Consequently, pupils who may struggle to read will not develop the necessary knowledge and skills to become confident readers quickly enough.
- As a result of these failings, pupils continue not to be prepared well enough for their next steps and future opportunities and experiences.
- These requirements of the independent school standards (the standards) in this part remain unmet.

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

Paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(v)

- At the previous inspection, the curriculum for PSHE education was not being delivered consistently well. Pupils did not learn enough about different faiths or cultures. They did not benefit from opportunities to contribute to the local area and more widely. Leaders were not preparing pupils well enough for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have planned a new, more coherent PSHE education curriculum. This has been implemented since September. There are more planned visits to different places of worship and a greater emphasis on teaching pupils about different beliefs in the 'My World' unit of work. At the start of most days, there is a 'current affairs' session.
- Staff have not implemented these new aspects consistently. It is unclear in the current

affairs lessons exactly what pupils should know and remember and how these lessons are building pupils' learning over time. It is unclear what knowledge pupils should be learning from their lessons in the 'My Well-being' unit of study. Consequently, pupils struggle to recall what they have learned. One pupil commented, 'I don't know what we were meant to remember.'

- Prior to the new PSHE education curriculum, pupils did experience a trip to a local church and were involved in some charitable work providing food for those who are homeless. However, these experiences have not ensured that pupils understand how they can contribute positively to society and develop respect for different faiths. Pupils cannot recall why they undertook these activities or what they learned from them. Pupils are unable to recall any learning about different faiths and beliefs.
- These requirements of the standard in this part remain unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7 to 7(b)

- At the previous inspection, leaders had mostly maintained a secure culture of safeguarding. However, the school's risk assessment policy was not implemented effectively. The policy did not give clear guidance to those completing risk assessments. Leaders had not developed their practices for improving the quality of risk assessments since the standard inspection. Potential risks and control measures identified in risk assessments potentially left pupils unsafe. The weaknesses in risk assessments undermined the culture of safeguarding.
- Leaders have maintained a secure culture of safeguarding. They know pupils and their backgrounds well. The family support offer provides an effective link between families, the school and other external agencies. Staff take appropriate steps when they are concerned about pupils' welfare. Regular training and daily briefings ensure that all staff are up to date with contextualised safeguarding information. All pre-employment checks are undertaken before adults start working with pupils.
- The risk assessment policy has been updated and strengthened. Potential risks and control measures identified in risk assessments no longer potentially leave pupils unsafe. Individual pupil risk assessments are updated after new behaviours are displayed. There are still weaknesses in the risk assessment process, but these do not undermine the culture of safeguarding.
- This previously unmet standard is now met.

Paragraphs 16 to 16(b)

- Some weaknesses remain in the risk assessment process. The risk assessment policy now contains a matrix to guide staff when filling in health and safety risks. However, the policy still does not provide sufficient guidance to enable staff to complete individual pupil risk assessments accurately. The lack of clear guidance as to what constitutes the different levels of risk means that there is some inconsistency in how well staff evaluate risk. In turn, this means that control measures put in place are not always fully adequate to manage the identified risk. These weaknesses undermine the effective implementation of the school's approach to risk assessment.
- Notwithstanding the fact that risk assessments are updated whenever new, risky behaviour is displayed, the timescales for when all pupil risk assessments are reviewed

are not clear. Leaders have not defined what constitutes a 'regular review', which has led to confusion among staff. As a result, the risk assessments staff use may not include the most up-to-date guidance to manage identified risks.

- This standard remains unmet.
- The school continues to not meet all the previously unmet standards in this part.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy is on the school's website.
- These requirements of the standard remain met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1) to 34(1)(c)

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the standards to ensure that the school consistently met them all.
- Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has not ensured that all the previously unmet standards are now securely and consistently met.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is effectively implemented. They have not ensured that staff know exactly what important knowledge and skills pupils should know and remember across the different pathways. Pupils are not learning as well as they could. Not all staff are suitably trained to understand and provide for the specific needs of some pupils with SEND.
- Pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain or to make a positive contribution to society. Leaders do not ensure that pupils understand the need to respect different faiths and cultures.
- Weaknesses remain in the risk assessment process.
- This standard remains 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. 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	135754
DfE registration number	941/6070
Inspection number	10304004

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 special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Jade Gibson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,500 to £32,000
Telephone number	01604970320
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	northamptonps@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	12 to 14 July 2022

Information about this school

- Progress Schools – Northamptonshire is registered to provide full-time education for up to 50 pupils aged 13 to 16 years. There are currently 30 pupils on roll.
- The school offers education to pupils with behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs. Many of these pupils have been excluded from their previous provision. The school also makes provision for pupils with SEND, several of whom have EHC plans.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in July 2022 and the school received an overall judgement of inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place on 14

March 2023.

- The headteacher took up her post in September 2023. There are a significant number of staff vacancies at the school which are currently being filled by supply staff.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE), the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the standards that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The inspection was carried out without notice in line with the commission from the DfE. The inspection was the school's second monitoring inspection.
- A progress monitoring inspection of the school took place on 14 March 2023 where it was judged to not comply with all the standards that were checked during the inspection.
- Following the most recent progress monitoring inspection in March 2023, the DfE required the school to prepare an action plan. Ofsted evaluated the plan on 7 July 2023. The DfE rejected the action plan.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior staff. The inspector spoke with company officers, including the safeguarding leader and special educational needs coordinator. The inspector spoke to the chair of the proprietor body.
- The inspector discussed the curriculum with company subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met some pupils to talk about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents relating to the school's provision, including the school action plan, safeguarding records and pupils' risk assessments.
- The inspector checked a sample of pupils' EHC plans and individual education development plans.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and recruitment procedures.

Inspection team

Dave Gilkerson, 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 un-met 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)(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(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 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(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(iii) encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - 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

- 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.

The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards

- 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.

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