

Inspection of Progress Schools - Thrapston

Cedar Drive, Thrapston, Northampton NN14 4LZ

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an improving school. Pupils talk positively about recent improvements. They say that teaching, the environment and behaviour have all got better. They value their 'Chill Out Room' and understand how they must conduct themselves in order to use it.

Relationships are positive. Staff make time to get to know pupils when they join. Pupils' needs are identified and carefully planned for. Staff know how to help when pupils struggle to manage their behaviour or their emotions. When this happens, pupils are supportive of one another. They do their utmost to stay focussed on their work. Pupils value the work of the pastoral support team. As one pupil said: 'When things get difficult, they talk us through it.'

Across the staff, there is a united ambition for pupils. The school's values are commonly understood and strived for. Pupils know what is expected of them, including the aim for them to be 'proudly passionate', 'creative collaborators' and 'robustly resilient'. They appreciate earning points for demonstrating these and the rest of the school's values.

Pupils say that the curriculum has improved. Inspectors agree. However, the curriculum remains at an early stage of development and implementation. Pupils are yet to benefit from a good quality of education.

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

The school has recently overhauled its curriculum. While there are many green shoots, the curriculum is not yet fully developed and implemented.

The 'build', 'grow' and 'launch' phases ensure that the curriculum is suitably tailored to pupils' needs. The 'My Topics' provide a broad range of subjects for pupils to study. In some places, including English and mathematics, the curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced. It is clear in these subjects what pupils are expected to learn and when.

However, the curriculum is not fully sequenced across the full range of subject areas. In science and some aspects of 'My Topics', the broad outline of the curriculum is planned, but content has not been fully sequenced across the school year. Additionally, in these subjects, while the curriculum makes clear what pupils will learn at each stage of their education, it does not identify which are the most important parts that pupils are expected to know and remember longer term. This can prevent pupils from developing a secure understanding in these subjects over time.

Assessment is used well to identify pupils' needs when they arrive at the school. Daily de-briefs ensure that pupils' progress is monitored carefully. However, the

school's approach to using assessment, like the curriculum, is at an early stage of implementation. It is established and working well in some subjects. Assessment has yet to be rolled out across the full range of 'My Topic' areas.

The school prioritises reading. Assessments of pupils' reading ability, completed when they first join the school, are used to inform teaching. Regular opportunities to read, and reading lessons, are timetabled. Staff ensure that pupils read a wide range of genres, and that they understand what they read. Pupils appreciate the reading books that have been recently purchased. The school is equipped to support pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read.

Over time, pupils get the help that they need to improve their behaviour. The school monitors instances of poor behaviour closely. It ensures that incidents are fully evaluated. The school uses these evaluations to help bring about improvements to the support pupils receive to help them manage their behaviour.

The school has robust procedures in place to tackle poor attendance. There has been a demonstrable improvement in pupils' attendance. However, absence remains high. Too many pupils still miss too much school.

The school is quick to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Individual education development plans outline pupils' targets for improvement and the support that they require. Recent training has ensured that targets are precise, achievable and measurable.

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are woven through the 'My Well-being', 'My Relationships', 'My Safety' and 'My Body' topics. Content builds cumulatively on what has been taught before. The 'My Future' curriculum ensures that pupils receive well-tailored independent careers advice. Pupils are appropriately prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

At all levels, leadership has a refreshed and ambitious vision for pupils at the school. Leaders have created a united staff team. Staff say that leaders consider their workload and well-being. There is a systematic approach to training and checks on the quality of provision. Senior leaders provide the school with regular challenge and support.

The proprietor knows the school well. They have recently established a new advisory board to increase scrutiny and accountability.

The proprietor has ensured that all the independent school standards (the standards) are met. The school premises are maintained well. There are appropriate procedures in place in relation to first aid, fire safety, and health and safety. All necessary information is available to parents, including the school's safeguarding policy, which is available on the school's website. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum is not yet fully planned and sequenced across all subjects. It is not always clear what knowledge pupils should learn and when. Nor is it always clear what the most important knowledge is that pupils should know and commit to their long-term memory. This means that there is not yet a fully rounded view of how pupils' learning is expected to progress, over time, across the full breadth of subjects. This limits leaders and teachers' opportunities to check that the most important content of the curriculum is being taught effectively. The school should ensure that the curriculum is fully planned and sequenced across all subjects, and that there is clarity about the knowledge pupils should gain over time.
- Assessment in some areas of the curriculum, including in 'My Topics', is at an early stage of development and implementation. Where this is the case, there is not a precise-enough picture of how well pupils learn new knowledge. Leaders should ensure that assessment procedures are fully developed and implemented across all areas of the curriculum, so that leaders and teachers have a precise understanding of how well pupils are achieving.
- Absence remains high. Although attendance is improving, too many pupils still miss too much school. This means that they miss out on the opportunities to benefit from the improving curriculum, the support for pupils to manage their behaviour and the provision for their personal development. Leaders should ensure that those pupils who require it receive the support that they need to be able to attend regularly.

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	147697
DfE registration number	940/6011
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10286470
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent School
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Progress Schools limited
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Rachel Parmanum
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,500 to £32,500
Telephone number	01832 777089
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	thrapstonPS@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 March 2022

Information about this school

- Progress Schools - Thrapston is registered to provide full-time education for up to 60 pupils aged 11 to 16 years. There are currently 13 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 uses the services of one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school's most recent standard inspection took place from 15 to 17 March 2022, at which the school received an overall judgement of inadequate.
- The school has received two progress monitoring inspections. These took place on 12 October 2022 and 20 April 2023.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspection took place without notice. This was in line with the commission from the Department for Education (DfE).
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, art and personal and PSHE. 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 looked at individual pupils' support plans and spoke to the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- Inspectors considered a wide variety of school documents, including the school self-evaluation and the school development plan.

- Inspectors considered the results of the Ofsted staff survey. Inspectors met with small groups of pupils to gather their views. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture of safeguarding that puts pupils' needs first.
- Inspectors considered relevant documentation and reviewed the school facilities, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

- During the inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous progress monitoring inspection on 20 April 2023.
- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school now meets the previously failed standards.**
- At the previous progress monitoring inspection, the inspector determined that the school had made little progress towards implementing a well-planned curriculum. Teaching did not take into account pupils' prior learning. Reading had not been sufficiently prioritised. Not all pupils who needed support with reading received it. The school had not established effective ways to check whether the curriculum was being implemented effectively.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum. There are robust assessment procedures in place in English and mathematics. In these subjects, teachers have the necessary information about pupils' prior learning. Assessment in other subjects is developing. Reading is now prioritised, both in and across the curriculum. Pupils' ability to read is comprehensively checked on entry to the school.
- At the previous progress monitoring inspection, the inspector determined that the school's risk assessment policy did not give clear guidance to staff about how individual risk assessments should be reviewed and updated. The policy stated that each pupil should have an individual risk assessment completed on entry to the school. Many pupils did not have such risk assessments. Risk assessments that were in place varied in quality.
- The school's updated risk assessment policy is robust. It provides clear guidance about how risk assessments should be updated and reviewed. All pupils have appropriate risk assessments in place.
- At the previous progress monitoring inspection, the inspector identified some capacity for sustained improvement. However, proprietor had not acted sufficiently to ensure that the school met all the standards securely and consistently.
- The school's capacity for sustained improvement has been maintained. The previously unmet standards are now met.

Information about the progress monitoring inspection

- The DfE commissioned a progress monitoring inspection to take place at the same time as the standard inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the requirements of the standards that relate to the curriculum, the quality of teaching, the welfare, health and safety of pupils and leadership and management that were judged as unmet at the emergency inspection which took place on 20 April 2023.
- This was the school's third progress monitoring inspection.
- The DfE required the school to submit an action plan. Ofsted evaluated this plan on 4 August 2023 and deemed it to be unacceptable. The DfE rejected the action plan.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor and school leaders.
- The lead inspector considered documentation related to: the curriculum; the teaching of reading; assessment; and risk assessment.

The school now meets the following 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;
 - 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; 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

- 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 and management

- 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.

Inspection team

Vic Wilkinson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Liz Moore

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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