

Progress Schools – Carlisle

7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ

Inspection date

13 December 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, 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b) and 2(1)(b)(i)

- When the school received its standard inspection in April 2023, inspectors found this part of the independent school standards (the standards) to be unmet. Inspectors found that the curriculum did not meet the needs of all pupils. This included those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), some of whom had an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For example, some pupils did not have the prior knowledge that they needed to learn the content of the curriculum. The curriculum had not been sufficiently developed for pupils in key stage 3, or for those pupils who found reading difficult. These weaknesses prevented some pupils from building and deepening knowledge as well as they should.
- Following the standard inspection, the school submitted an action plan to Ofsted in August 2023. However, the action plan was rejected by the Department for Education (DfE). The proposed actions did not make clear which subjects would be the focus of leaders' improvement work. The plan did not explain fully the actions that leaders were going to take to ensure that the curriculum would meet the needs of pupils in key stage 3 or those pupils with SEND.
- During this progress monitoring inspection, inspectors found that the school has carried out a review of its curriculum. This review was found to have led to some improvements to plans and schemes of work in English, mathematics and science. However, curriculum development in other subjects remains incomplete. In these curriculum areas, leaders had not successfully clarified all of the key knowledge that pupils should learn, nor the order in which pupils should learn this new information. Schemes of work and curriculum plans, including plans for individual pupils, did not provide staff with enough information about the small steps of learning that some pupils should take, including those pupils with EHC plans. This made it more difficult for staff to ensure that pupils could learn everything that they needed to know. It also made it challenging for pupils to know more and remember more knowledge over time in different subjects.

- The school has taken steps towards improving the curriculum for pupils at the early stage of reading. However, this work is at too much of an early stage to have had an impact on pupils.

Paragraph 2(2)(h)

- At the school's standard inspection in April 2023, this standard was found to be met. However, at the request of the DfE, this standard was considered during this progress monitoring inspection.
- Evidence from this progress monitoring inspection showed that some pupils did not have the opportunities that they should have had to learn and to make progress across the curriculum. For example, the proprietor body had not ensured that the curriculum took sufficient account of the needs of pupils with EHC plans, or of those who struggle with reading. This hindered the progress that these pupils made in the range of subjects that they studied.

Paragraphs 3, 3(d), 3(e) and 3(g)

- When the standard inspection took place in April 2023, this standard was unmet. The school had not ensured that staff had the necessary subject knowledge to teach the curriculum effectively. Teaching did not reflect a thorough understanding of pupils' prior knowledge, aptitudes or needs. Staff lacked the expertise to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Furthermore, inspectors found that in some subjects, misconceptions and shortfalls in pupils' knowledge were not successfully addressed. Information from assessments was not used as effectively as it should have been to shape future teaching. Consequently, some pupils were unable to learn successfully or to remember knowledge over time.
- Following the standard inspection, the school submitted an action plan in August 2023. However, the action plan was judged to be unacceptable. Although leaders stated their proposals to make changes to assessment processes in mathematics and English, the action plan did not provide information about the nature of these changes. It did not set out how pupils' needs and aptitudes in other subjects would be assessed. The action plan proposed some appropriate actions and timescales for the provision of training to staff and to subject leaders. However, there was no information about the subjects to which this training would relate, nor the difference that leaders expected the training to make to staff's knowledge and expertise.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, evidence showed that although the curriculum now includes key stage 3, the curriculum does not take sufficient account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan. The curriculum in some subjects remains undeveloped. Although staff have received some further training since the last inspection, this training has not strengthened staff's subject knowledge sufficiently. This continues, in some lessons, to result in a failure to address pupils' misconceptions or their missing knowledge. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress that they should.
- The standards in this part remain unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

- The proprietor body has ensured that there is a suitable safeguarding policy in place and that this is published on the school's website. This policy has regard to the appropriate statutory guidance.
- There are secure procedures in place for staff to report any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare. The school communicates with other professionals, such as the local authority, to ensure that pupils are safe and well when not in school.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps staff to recognise when pupils may be at risk of harm. The proprietor body demonstrates the diligence required when checking references for newly appointed staff.

Paragraphs 9(a)–(c)

- At the request of the DfE, this standard was considered as part of this progress monitoring inspection. The proprietor body has put suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place. Any incidents of poor behaviour are appropriately recorded. Leaders cross-reference these with other concerns so that they can gain a detailed picture of an individual pupil and respond promptly to any needs that arise. The behaviour and anti-bullying policy includes appropriate and proportionate sanctions. The policy contains details of the actions that leaders take to address any bullying incidents.
- The standards in this part continue to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)

- At the school's standard inspection in April 2023, the standard in this part was unmet. The proprietor and leaders did not demonstrate the knowledge and skills to ensure that all of the standards were consistently met.
- The action plan that the school submitted to Ofsted in August 2023 was judged to be unacceptable by the DfE.
- At this progress monitoring inspection, evidence showed that despite a further curriculum review and some improvements to the reading curriculum, leaders had not taken sufficient action to ensure that the school met all of the standards that were found to be unmet in July 2022. The quality of education remained poor.
- The standard in this part is not met.

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	135555
DfE registration number	942/6097
Inspection number	10310018

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 day school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	Charlotte Barton
Headteacher	Philippa Skate
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,500 to £32,000
Telephone number	01228 586004
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	carlisle@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	25 to 27 April 2023

Information about this school

- The last standard inspection took place in April 2023.
- The school operates from premises at 7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ.
- A new headteacher was appointed in October 2023.
- The school provides short- and longer term placements for pupils who are disengaged from education, who have been permanently excluded, or who are at risk of exclusion from education.
- Leaders make use of one unregistered alternative provider.

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 standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The previous standard inspection took place from 25 to 27 April 2023. At this inspection, the school was judged not to comply with the standards.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan. This plan was statutory. Ofsted evaluated the plan on 18 August 2023. The DfE rejected this action plan.
- As part of this monitoring inspection, the DfE required the inspector to check: part 1, paragraph 2(2)(h); part 3, paragraphs 7 and 9, and part 6, paragraph 32.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspectors considered any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors spoke with the head of school. The lead inspector spoke with the proprietor body's national safeguarding leader. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with the national leader for the curriculum, and with the chair of the proprietor body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum. They looked at curriculum plans and pupils' timetables and at samples of pupils' work. An inspector spoke with staff, visited some lessons, and talked with a small number of pupils about their work and about wider school life.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andy Cunningham

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.
- 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.

Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 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.

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