

# Inspection of Progress Schools – Hamilton Square

60 Hamilton Square, Wirral CH41 5AT

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Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

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?**

Progress Schools – Hamilton Square welcomes pupils who have not benefited from a positive experience at their previous schools. Before joining this school, these pupils have all experienced exclusion. Many have developed negative views of education. Staff at the school endeavour to make pupils feel that they are valued members of this school community. As a result, some pupils told inspectors that they feel better supported and happier at this school.

Pupils' achievement is variable. The school has low expectations of what some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can and should achieve. Some pupils at the early stages of learning to read are not supported well enough. This hinders how well these pupils learn across the different subjects. Pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training as they should be.

Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school is poor. Some pupils display negative attitudes towards learning. They do not engage well in lessons and often walk out of classes. Some pupils do not show respect to staff or to each other. Pupils' attendance is low.

The proprietor body has not acted rapidly enough to improve, or respond to, the considerable weaknesses in the school. While the school has started to prioritise the most pressing issues, there are many aspects of its work that require urgent improvement.

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

The quality of education provided by the school has declined since the previous inspection. Recently, the school has taken some steps to improve this situation. It has put new curriculums in place for different subjects. These curriculums set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn. However, it is very early days. There is inconsistency and variability in how well these new curriculums are delivered by staff. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they should.

From September 2023, pupils have started to work towards GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, pupils do not study for qualifications in other subjects. This limits pupils' opportunities when they leave this school.

Across the school, the use of assessment strategies is evolving. Staff are starting to use assessment methods to identify gaps that pupils may have in their learning. Some staff regularly check pupils' recall of prior learning. They use this information to identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' learning before introducing new knowledge. As a result, these pupils have the knowledge that they need to embark on new learning with confidence. However, this is not the case across the school.

The school has processes in place to support staff to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff have received suitable training to enable them to address the different needs that pupils may have. On the whole, staff adapt lessons successfully so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum alongside their peers. Nevertheless, these pupils' learning is hindered by the same weaknesses in the curriculum that impact on the learning of their peers.

The school has systems in place to identify those pupils who struggle with reading. However, the school has not put a suitable programme in place to support these pupils to learn to read. Consequently, some of these pupils do not receive the help that they need to read accurately and fluently. In addition, the school does not promote a love of reading. Few pupils spend time reading for pleasure or for information.

A considerable number of pupils, including those pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, regularly miss school. Persistent absence rates are high. Pupils' attendance shows little signs of sustained improvement. The school has not taken the urgent, appropriate actions required to improve the attendance of all pupils.

Most of the pupils with SEND require a high level of specialist support from staff to help them to regulate their behaviour. However, some staff struggle to manage pupils' behaviour. Added to this, some staff do not implement the school's behaviour policy as intended. Too often, the poor behaviour of some pupils disrupts the learning of others.

The school's programme of personal, social, health and economic education enables pupils to learn about democracy and fundamental British values. It also ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online and when using social media. Pupils learn the importance of respect for other people, regardless of their differences. In relationships and sex education, pupils learn about healthy relationships, including concepts such as consent.

Pupils receive impartial, personalised careers support. However, they have limited access to work experience. This hinders pupils' ability to make well-informed decisions about their next steps and possible future careers.

Recently, the school has organised a small number of extra-curricular activities. However, pupils have limited opportunities that enable them to develop their interests and talents.

Staff feel well supported by the school. They appreciate that the school considers their workload and well-being when making decisions. Staff value the daily debrief sessions that allow them to receive support and advice from each other.

The proprietor body has overseen a decline in some areas of the school's performance since the previous inspection. It has not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards ('the standards') consistently. It has not taken the urgent action needed to improve the quality of education and to ensure the

welfare, health and safety of pupils. Recently, leaders have taken some suitable steps to improve the school. However, these have not, at this point, had enough impact on pupils' achievement.

The proprietor body has ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There are minor weaknesses with the school's safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding records are kept in different places. This makes it difficult for the school to assure itself that any concerns about pupils are reported and recorded, and lead to appropriate action.

The school provides effective training so that staff understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. The school works effectively with a wide range of external agencies for the benefit of vulnerable pupils. It carries out all of the required checks to reassure itself that staff are suitable to work with children. The school's safeguarding policy is compliant with the latest statutory guidance and is published on the school's website.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects, the school is still in the process of introducing the new curriculums. Some staff do not have the knowledge and skills needed to deliver these new curriculums as intended. Added to this, pupils are unable to study for qualifications in some subjects. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff are suitably trained to deliver the subject curriculums effectively and that pupils are able to gain appropriate qualifications in the different subjects.
- The school does not promote a love of reading among pupils. Added to this, it has not put a suitable programme in place for those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. This hampers how well pupils access the curriculum. The school should ensure that it prioritises reading across the school.
- The attendance of many pupils is consistently low. These pupils miss out on important learning, which hinders how well they achieve. The school must address pupils' poor attendance with urgency in order to bring about sustained improvement.
- The school has not ensured that staff have the skills and knowledge to implement the behaviour policy as intended. A number of pupils do not improve their behaviour from when they join the school. The school should provide appropriate training and support for staff to help improve pupils' behaviour.

- The school has not ensured that it maintains safeguarding records appropriately. This makes it difficult for the school to assure itself that any concerns about pupils result in appropriate actions. The school should ensure that accurate, up-to-date, coherent records are kept of all concerns about pupils' safety and welfare.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the standards are met consistently. These failings impact on the quality of education provided by the school and welfare, health and safety of pupils. The proprietor body must ensure that it takes urgent action to ensure that all of the standards are met consistently.

### **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147468
<b>DfE registration number</b>	344/6003
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	10303910
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	60
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Progress Schools Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Charlotte Barton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Aarron Stafford
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£13,500 to £38,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 318 5066
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.progress-schools.co.uk">www.progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:hamiltonsquarePS@progress-schools.co.uk">hamiltonsquarePS@progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 June 2021

## Information about this school

- All the places at the school are commissioned by the local authority for pupils who have been excluded. Most pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. Currently, there are no key stage 3 pupils at the school.
- The school is located in premises at 60 Hamilton Street, Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 5AT.
- The previous inspection was carried out from 8 to 10 June 2021.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of 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 of 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the chair of the proprietor body, and a range of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included information relating to the standards, the school's curriculum and leaders' improvement priorities.
- 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 lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with some parents and carers to gather their views.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

- There were no responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises.

### **Inspection team**

Rebecca Sharples, 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.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
  - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
  - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
  - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 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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