

# Inspection of Progress Schools Wigan

Wigan Youth Zone, Parsons Walk, Wigan WN1 1RU

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Inspection dates: 27 to 29 February 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Progress Schools Wigan welcomes pupils who have become disengaged from education. Pupils have experienced considerable disruption to their schooling prior to joining this school. They appreciate that this school gives them the chance to complete their education and work towards building a successful future life. Pupils forge positive relationships quickly with staff. They told inspectors that that staff care about them and listen to their views. Pupils value the time and attention that staff at this school give to them. This makes pupils feel happy.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff make effective use of pupils' interests to engage them in their learning and to reduce their anxieties and worries. Staff expect pupils to abide by the values of the school. Pupils who struggle to do so are given sensitive and caring guidance. This supports pupils to focus on their lessons and behave well.

Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are starting to benefit from an improved curriculum and the school's raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, the school's new subject curriculums have only recently been introduced. Pupils do not achieve as highly as they should.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities that they have beyond the curriculum. For example, cooking as part of weekly enrichment sessions. They benefit from experiences that broaden their horizons. For example, volunteering on a farm, fundraising activities and trips to an indoor skiing slope.

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

There have been significant and frequent changes to leadership and staffing at the school over an extended period of time. The proprietor has sought to stabilise staffing and leadership within the school. In the meantime, the proprietor has worked hard to minimise the impact of this staffing turbulence on pupils. However, these changes have led to inconsistencies and slowed the implementation of planned improvements to the delivery of the wider curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has taken decisive action to raise the ambition of the curriculum offer provided for pupils at the school. The school's aim is to prepare pupils to return to mainstream school or to successfully move on to post-16 education or employment. To this end, the proprietor has overhauled the curriculums in all areas of learning required by the independent school standards ('the standards'). It has identified the important content that pupils need to know and remember in each subject and has ordered this knowledge carefully. This provides clarity for teachers on what should be taught, when it should be taught and how pupils' learning is built up over time.

Staff have been provided with some appropriate subject-specific training to increase their confidence and skills when delivering the wider curriculum subjects. However,

this work has been hindered by the significant staff and leadership changes within the school. Staff are developing their expertise in delivering the new subject curriculums, including helping pupils to know and remember important curriculum content over time. Within lessons staff make checks on pupils' understanding and address pupils' misconceptions. Nevertheless, pupils are at an early stage of developing the knowledge that they need to match the raised ambition of the wider curriculum. This means that pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils arrive at the school with gaps in their reading knowledge which can hinder their access to the curriculum. As with other areas of the curriculum, the school has worked to improve the reading provision for pupils. It has ensured that there is a focus on developing pupils' fluency and confidence in reading. This ensures that those pupils who find reading difficult are supported to catch up.

The school carries out checks when pupils arrive at the school to identify their emotional, social and academic needs. The school ensures that it uses the information about pupils' SEND to adapt lesson activities appropriately. For example, staff break learning down into manageable steps for those pupils who struggle to cope with large amounts of new information or have difficulties concentrating.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They have a clear understanding of pupils' needs. Recent changes to the school's behaviour approaches have helped pupils to develop strategies to manage their own behaviour. Typically, pupils improve their attendance from their starting points. Most pupils have a history of poor attendance at their previous schools, and some have been out of school for a considerable period of time prior to joining this school. However, a few pupils do not attend as well as they should. Staff work closely with parents and carers and external agencies to support these pupils to improve their attendance.

Pupils receive well-thought-out personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Pupils learn about the importance of looking after their physical and mental health. They benefit from the school's relationships and sex education and health education programmes. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships. They also learn about how to manage risks in the community and online. However, the school has not given sufficient thought to the design of its personal development programme. It has not given enough thought about the sequence of learning over time and the balance of opportunities that pupils are provided with. This means that, at times, pupils do not experience the breadth of coverage that they should.

Pupils access appropriate impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance. They learn about different careers and the pathways into them. This programme helps pupils to identify destinations that match their interests and aspirations.

Staff appreciate the support that they have received from leaders for their well-being and workload. Staff value the daily end-of-day discussions. These enable staff

to reflect on the day's events and identify any actions that should be put in place for the next day or further ahead.

The proprietor understands its roles and responsibilities. It provides support for leaders as well as holding the school to account. The newly appointed advisory board has strengthened the proprietor's oversight of the school's provision. This board ensures that the standards are met, including the school's statutory responsibilities under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The recent improvements to the school's curriculum offer illustrate that the proprietor has the capacity to address the areas for improvement identified in this inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- There have been significant changes to leadership and staffing at the school over an extended period of time. This has slowed improvements to the way the curriculum is implemented and negatively impacted on the consistency of experience for pupils at the school. The proprietor should ensure that leaders and staff are supported to focus on creating stability and consistency so that improvement work can have a greater impact on pupils' learning.
- Staff lack some of the subject expertise needed to deliver the wider curriculum as intended. This means that pupils' learning is not as secure as it should be in several subjects. The school should ensure that staff receive the guidance and support that they need to deliver these new curriculums as intended. This includes supporting staff to help pupils to learn and remember important curriculum content so that pupils can deepen their subject knowledge over time.
- The school's programme for personal development is not sufficiently well-thought-out. The school has not considered carefully enough the progression of learning and the balance of opportunities that pupils are provided with. This means that, at times, pupils do not experience the breadth of coverage that they should. The school should further strengthen the programme so that pupils have carefully ordered opportunities to broaden and deepen their personal development still further.

## **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>	145187
<b>DfE registration number</b>	359/6002
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	10286454
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day 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>	10
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Progress Schools Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Charlotte Charnley (also known as Charlotte Barton)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Hurn
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£14,000 to £38,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 914041
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.progress-schools.co.uk">www.progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:wiganPS@progress-schools.co.uk">wiganPS@progress-schools.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 December 2021

## Information about this school

- There have been significant staff and leadership changes at the school since the last inspection. This includes a period of interim leadership from October 2023. The current head of school has been in post for three weeks. The head of school was absent from school during the inspection.
- The school offers short and long-term alternative provision placements.
- The school is based within the Wigan Youth Zone which is located at Parsons Walk, Wigan WN1 1RU.
- Progress Schools Limited is the proprietor body. It operates 13 other independent schools located across the country. The chair of the proprietor body has changed since the previous inspection. The proprietor has recently established an advisory board for this school which consists of individuals who are not employed by the proprietor.
- Most pupils join the school with significant gaps in learning. Many have not engaged in education for a long period of time prior to joining this school.
- All the pupils at the school have SEND. Pupils typically have social, emotional and mental health needs. The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school received its previous standard inspection 8 to 10 December 2021.

## 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 has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the interim head of school, staff, members of the proprietor's body's national and regional teams and the chair of the proprietor body.
- The lead inspector held meetings with other leaders, including those responsible for SEND, pupils' behaviour and attendance, and staff training.

- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of local authorities who are responsible for placing pupils at the school.
- Inspectors checked the school site for school's compliance with the standards. As part of these checks, the lead inspector toured the school premises, accompanied by a school leader.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum across other subject areas. They looked at curriculum documentation, considered samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about these subjects.
- 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 around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of the school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included documentation and information relating to the standards and the school's improvement plans.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the online pupil and staff surveys. Inspectors also spoke to some parents by telephone.

### **Inspection team**

Rebecca Jewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pippa Jackson Maitland

His Majesty's Inspector



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