

Progress Schools - Hamilton Square

60 Hamilton Square, Wirral CH41 5AT

Inspection date

17 July 2024

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)- 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(b), 3, 3(b), 3(c), 3(f), 3(h)

- At the time of the standard inspection in December 2023, the school had taken some steps to improve the quality of education that pupils received. However, new curriculum plans and schemes of work were in their infancy. There was inconsistency and variability in how well the curriculum was being delivered by staff. Some pupils were not learning as well as they should. Also, pupils in key stage 4 did not study for qualifications in subjects other than English, mathematics, and science. Moreover, the curriculum did not sufficiently take into account the ages and needs of all pupils, including those with an education, health, and care (EHC) plan. Furthermore, some pupils displayed negative attitudes towards learning and did not engage well in lessons. Some staff struggled to manage pupils' behaviour.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in April 2024, leaders' plans to improve the quality of education for pupils regarding the curriculum were not sufficient.
- The new curriculum continues to be implemented by the school and training for staff has taken place through the academic year. Several new staff have been appointed to the school. This includes an increase in the number of staff who have qualified teacher status.
- The school's curriculum policy sets out a broad range of subjects that pupils will study. These include English, mathematics, science, personal, social, health and economic education, art and design and physical education. At the time of this inspection, some staff were delivering the new curriculums in English, mathematics, and science. However, this was not the case across the school. Some pupils were following a 'transition' curriculum in preparation for the next academic year. This did not match the school's plans and schemes of work.
- At the time of this inspection, pupils could only study for GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics, and science. This continues to restrict the opportunities and choices pupils can make toward their future education. Also, there are no literacy and numeracy

qualifications available to the pupils that would struggle to access or succeed in these subjects at GCSE level.

- The school has drawn up a reading strategy. It has invested in an online, age-appropriate, early reading and phonics intervention and trained some staff to support pupils in using this programme. Leaders assess all pupils on entry for reading age and skills. However, these assessments do not always provide the school with accurate information so that interventions meet pupils' needs. Moreover, the school has not considered the interventions needed to support those pupils who can decode but struggle with understanding the content of texts.
- There have been some improvements in the school's systems for checking for pupils' gaps in curriculum knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the school does not effectively use the information about pupils' starting points to inform pupils' individual learning plans. These do not identify the appropriate next steps for pupils.
- The school has designed detailed lesson plans to support the delivery of the curriculum. Staff have had training to develop their skills and confidence in delivering these lessons as well as to be able to adapt learning activities so that pupils can access the curriculum. For instance, in some lessons, texts are simplified for some pupils. However, this is not the case across school. There are still a number of pupils with different needs and starting points being taught the same things in the same way.
- The school has purchased some age-appropriate resources to support learning. This includes reading books that are suitable for young adults who are struggling readers. However, some resources are not suitable for secondary-age pupils.
- The school's improvements in the implementation of the school's behaviour policy and the associated staff training have made a positive difference. Staff are more confident in their management of pupil's behaviour. In turn, pupils are responding more responsibly and appropriately to the staff's expectations.
- Overall, the standards checked in this part remain unmet.

Part 3. Welfare, health, and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 9, 9(b), 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- At the time of the standard inspection, pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school was poor. Some pupils did not engage well in lessons and were disrespectful to staff and each other. Some staff struggled to manage pupils' behaviour and did not follow the school's behaviour policy. Moreover, the school's risk assessment policy was not written and implemented as well as it should have been.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in April 2024, it was judged that leaders' plans to improve behaviour and address concerns around the risk assessment policy, and its implementation, would address these standards.
- Staff have received additional training on the school's behaviour policy, including learning appropriate strategies to manage pupils' behaviour. School rules are displayed in classrooms and staff are consistent in implementing them. Any minor infringements are dealt with quickly and sensitively. As a result, pupils are more engaged in lessons.
- Leaders have revised the risk assessment policy. They have also revised pupils' individual risk assessments to clearly identify the risks associated with pupils not attending school.

This includes the risks to pupils' safety and to not receiving an education. School leaders review each pupil's attendance with the proprietor and local authority weekly. The proprietor has set up face-to-face tutoring sessions for all pupils that struggle to attend school regularly. Additionally, these pupils receive a face-to-face welfare check once a week.

- The school now meets the previously unmet requirements in the standards in this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous inspection in December 2023, the proprietor had overseen a decline in some areas of the school's performance and had not acted rapidly enough to resolve the considerable weaknesses in the school. Moreover, the proprietor had not ensured that the school met all of the standards securely and consistently. Nor had it taken the urgent action needed to improve the quality of education that pupils received and to ensure the welfare, health, and safety of pupils.
- When the school's action plan was evaluated in April 2024, it was judged that leaders' plans to improve leadership and management would address the unmet standards.
- Many of the actions that the proprietor and leaders outlined in their action plan have been implemented. For example, the proprietor has restructured the school's leadership team. An advanced skills teacher has been appointed to support the development of the curriculum and teaching. Senior leaders in the proprietor's group of schools are meeting school leaders weekly to hold them to account, for example, for pupils' attendance. Suitably qualified staff have been appointed to work with pupils in school as well as those who are persistently absent. Additional training and support have been provided for all staff to help them to fulfil their roles.
- The most notable and effective impact to date has been re-establishing positive behaviour in school. Moreover, there is much greater assurance around the safety and welfare of the pupils who are absent from school. The school is slowly improving attendance for individuals although there is still much work to do in this area.
- There have been some improvements in the quality of education and teaching, but fundamentally, these changes are too slow, not having enough impact, and do not fully meet the quality of education standards checked. There remains a lack of understanding of what makes a strong curriculum for pupils and how it is effectively implemented. The curriculum still does not consistently build the firm foundations that pupils need educationally. It does not take into account pupils' needs and the considerable gaps in most pupils' learning. As a result, it does not ensure that pupils at the school are well prepared for the next steps in education.
- Although the requirement related to the promotion of well-being is now met, the other requirements of this standard remain unmet. This 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	147468
DfE registration number	344/6003
Inspection number	10352132

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 school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Limited
Chair	Charlotte Charnley (known as Charlotte Barton)
Headteacher	Aarron Stafford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£13,500 to £38,000
Telephone number	0151 318 5066
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	hamiltonsquarePS@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	5 to 7 December 2023

Information about this school

- The school's most recent standard inspection was 5 to 7 December 2023.
- The school is located at 60 Hamilton Square, Wirral CH41 5AT. At the time of the inspection, this was the school's only site. However, the proprietor is in the process of seeking agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) to open a second school site. These proposed new premises will be located at Cornwall Close, New Ferry, Birkenhead, CH62 1BG.

- 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 EHC plan.
- The school has an agreed capacity with the DfE of up to 60 pupils. At the time of this inspection, there were 57 pupils on roll. There were no pupils in key stage 3, 35 pupils are in Year 11. Although it is beyond these pupils' statutory school leaving date, the school has chosen to not delete them from the school roll. It intends to keep these pupils on roll until it has been reassured of the pupils' destinations.
- The school is part of the Progress Schools group of schools.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.

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.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in December 2023. It was conducted with no notice.
- The DfE required the school to prepare an action plan. This plan was statutory. Ofsted evaluated this plan on 9 April 2024. The action plan was rejected by the DfE.
- The inspector met with the head of school who is also the designated safeguarding lead. She also met with other members of staff and the advanced skills practitioner, who oversees a group of Progress Schools based in the north west.
- The inspector met remotely with the chair of the proprietor body, who is also the managing director of Progress Schools Limited. She also met remotely with the company's director of schools, the director of education and the curriculum manager.
- As well as visiting some lessons, the inspector spoke to a few teachers. She looked at curriculum plans and schemes of work, examples of pupils' work and the curriculum policy.
- The inspector spoke informally to some pupils.
- The inspector looked at a wide variety of documentation in relation to the standards checked.
- At the request of the DfE, the inspector also considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central register of pre-employment checks and whether the school's safeguarding policy is available to parents. These requirements of the standards are met.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, 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 subparagraph (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; and
 - 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.

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.

The school now meets the following independent school standards.

Part 1. Quality of education provided.

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 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)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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