

Progress School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	888/6030
Unique Reference Number	131138
Inspection number	301589
Inspection dates	22-23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Progress School is an approved independent special school which opened in 1996 and is located near Preston in Lancashire. It is owned by Progress Care and Education Limited. The school provides residential care and education for 52 weeks per year for pupils aged 7 to 19 years who exhibit severe challenging behaviour and experience severe learning difficulties and associated medical needs. There are currently 21 pupils on roll and most have autistic spectrum disorder. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and are placed and funded by local authorities, mainly from the North West although some are from further afield. All the pupils are resident in one of the company's six children's homes located in the area. These homes have all been regularly inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The school also has an additional education base located at one of its children's homes. The school was last inspected in 1999.

Evaluation of the school

Progress School successfully achieves its aim of providing high quality integrated care and education which meets the complex needs of its pupils. It provides an outstanding level of care and a satisfactory and improving standard of education. The school is highly regarded by placing authorities and parents for the quality of its work and the positive impact it has on the lives of the pupils. It achieves this through its excellent work with families and a range of professionals. The school is well led and has a clear plan for further improvement. It has established a good range of policies and procedures which underpin its work. These are reviewed regularly and implemented with consistency and rigour. The school meets all the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now satisfactory with good features. Under the strong leadership of the principal the school is in the process of further reviewing and developing its written planning to more closely match the needs of the current pupil population. This is leading to a

sharper focus on the expected learning outcomes for pupils in the National Curriculum subjects. Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are promoted effectively across the curriculum. Through music and art the pupils develop their creativity, sense of rhythm and enjoyment of listening to music. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped both as a discrete subject and across the curriculum. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing the pupils' personal, social and study skills. The Access to Learning Skills programme is effective in enabling pupils to concentrate and so join in lessons. Strong links have been established between the residential and school curricula and these very effectively enhance pupils' personal development. Personal, social and health education is taught across both settings, with sex education being taught on an individual basis. This work is supported by studies of the human body within the science curriculum. The school uses the community very effectively to support the development of pupils' independence and life skills. Post-16 pupils complete ASDAN Unit awards and the school is rightly seeking to extend accreditation to the work of pupils under 16 as well. The Connexions service provides individual guidance for pupils as they prepare to leave. Most pupils go on into adult services either in their home area or within the company's adult provision.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory and rapidly improving. Recent changes to the planning formats and the introduction of a topic approach have brought about improvements to pupils' progress in learning and this is now satisfactory. A significant development has been the grouping of pupils for teaching. This has led to a better balance between individual teaching and opportunities for pupils to learn alongside each other. The pupils have responded well to these changes and are successfully learning to tolerate these group settings. In most lessons there is a good focus on developing pupils' individual communication skills. The pupils enjoy using ICT equipment but its use to support teaching and learning is limited. Residential educators provide good support for pupils in both care and education. They lead some lessons in the school under the direction and monitoring of teachers. The school has recently embarked on a training programme to develop the skills they need in the classroom and this is contributing to the improvements in the quality of teaching. Half of the lessons seen during the inspection were good. In the best lessons pupils are involved in practical activities which challenge them to think for themselves at the same time providing them with good support and encouragement. There is a clear focus on what the pupils are learning within the subject being studied as well as on the expected behaviours. These lessons are well planned, incorporating activities and resources which are well suited to the ages of the pupils. Staff know that where the activities are interesting this has a positive effect on behaviour. Where lessons could be better it is because pupils are asked to complete a series of unrelated tasks which do not motivate them to learn and the resources used are not always appropriate for the older pupils. As a result the pupils become distracted and heavily reliant on edible rewards to regain their concentration.

Assessment is satisfactory. The school tracks pupils' progress against the National Curriculum P Levels and records show that overall they are making satisfactory progress. Individual education programmes include targets for all subject areas. However some are not sufficiently clear about what knowledge, skills and understanding the pupils are expected to develop. They sometimes focus only on behaviour. As a result it is not easy to see how much progress the pupils have made in their learning in all subjects. This weakness is also reflected in the reports which are produced for parents, which clearly show the good, and sometimes exceptional, improvements in pupils' social skills and behaviour but not always what, and how well, they are learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A positive and respectful atmosphere is evident throughout the school and within the residences. The staff are absolutely consistent in implementing a non-confrontational approach to managing pupils' behaviour and this effectively reduces the levels of anxiety and tension. As a result the pupils place their trust in the staff and feel more secure in the resulting calm environment. The pupils respond positively to the structured routines and learn to communicate their needs and feelings in a less challenging manner. Their behaviour is good; they learn what is acceptable and are motivated by the individual rewards which their efforts and achievements bring. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attendance. Some pupils choose to go into the sensory room for a time of quietness and stillness.

The school has started to celebrate festivals from a range of cultures and other faiths and links these well to art and music. The pupils have individual care and education plans which are reviewed by staff teams every eight weeks. This works well and ensures that targets and programmes for personal and social development are relevant and effective. The school focuses on developing pupils' independence. They frequently go into the community to walk, shop or enjoy leisure facilities and visit places of interest. This also promotes their awareness of the wider community and the roles people have within it. Parents speak passionately about the changes they have seen in their children's development since coming to the school, particularly in their ability to relate to others in a more socially acceptable way. They value the support they receive from staff and this is reflected in the confidence with which they now visit the school and take their children out within the local area.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The proprietors and senior managers set very high standards and carefully monitor the quality of care in all settings. Detailed policies and procedures are in place to safeguard pupils from risk at the same time allowing them to experience and enjoy a wide range of activities within the school, their homes and in the wider community. Careful attention is given to promoting pupils' personal hygiene and

dignity and every effort is made to encourage the pupils to take more responsibility for their personal care. Key workers ensure that the pupils' views are heard. Staff are well trained in all aspects of child protection, first aid and positive handling. They are encouraged and enabled to improve their skills and qualifications. The designated child protection officer has received appropriate training. However, the proprietors were advised to appoint and train more than one designated person due to the geographical spread of the different premises which make up the school as a whole. The induction programme is thorough and ensures that staff have the necessary knowledge and confidence to work with vulnerable pupils. The school's Investor in People status is justly deserved.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has robust recruitment procedures in place which ensure that all staff undergo the required checks prior to commencing work with the company. A single central record of staff is being drawn up to meet the latest requirements. The proprietors establish high standards in respect of the qualifications and expertise needed for each post.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises were built in 1996 and are maintained to a high standard. The classrooms are of sufficient size for the individual and small group teaching which takes place. Specialist facilities are limited to a sensory room and a small ICT room. The grounds provide for a small playground area which is adequate because pupils rarely play out as a group. The school makes good use of local community facilities for sports and physical education.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The Prospectus gives clear information for parents and others about the care and education provided by the company. Parents are kept well informed about their child's life at school and are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Regular newsletters are lively, interesting and informative. The parents appreciate the annual training workshops which are run for them by the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all requirements. No formal complaints have been received.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England)

Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- improve the quality of teaching by sharing the features of the good practice which exists within the school
- ensure that teachers' planning and reports to parents have a clear focus on pupils' learning as well as their behaviour and personal skills
- provide resources for teaching and learning that are relevant to the ages of the pupils.

School details

Name of school	Progress School		
DfES number	888/6030		
Unique reference number	131138		
Type of school	Residential special school (approved)		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	December 1996		
Age range of pupils	7-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 2	Total: 21
Number of boarders	Boys: 19	Girls: 2	Total: 21
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 19	Girls: 2	Total: 21
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 15	Girls: 0	Total: 15
Annual fees (boarders)	£179,633 - £256,194		
Address of school	Gough Lane Bamber Bridge Preston Lancashire PR5 6AQ		
Telephone number	01772334832		
Fax number	01772314933		
Email address	lynlewis@progressschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Lyn Lewis		
Proprietor	Progress Care and Education Limited		
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI		
Dates of inspection	22-23 May 2007		