

# Progress Schools – Wigan

Parsons Walk, Wigan WN1 1RU

## Inspection dates

11–13 September 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and staff are guided by the genuine belief that every pupil deserves a chance to succeed.
- Leaders and staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure enough to learn.
- Over time, pupils begin to experience educational success. They make good progress from their starting points.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured the independent school standards are fully met.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. The board of governors makes an important contribution to school improvement.
- The curriculum is engaging. Pupils say that teachers make learning interesting. This includes the enriched curriculum, where there are opportunities to benefit from the excellent facilities the Youth Zone offers.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- Pupils’ attendance is significantly better than at their previous schools.
- Pupils’ personal development and welfare are an important part of the work of the school. Strong relationships help pupils develop their self-confidence and begin to feel positive about their future.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around school. Where difficulties arise, staff are adept at calming the situation quickly.
- Parents, carers and pupils feel that they are safe, listened to and cared for well.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers draw on prior learning and real life to make learning relevant to pupils.
- Assessment information is not always used well enough by teachers to match activities precisely to pupils’ needs and abilities, and to help them improve and move on in their learning.
- Teachers do not routinely ask sufficiently probing questions to encourage pupils to reason, think more deeply about their learning and articulate their understanding.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) regulations 2014 (‘the independent school standards’) and the associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment more precisely to match work to pupils' abilities and to help pupils know how to improve their work
  - are confident to ask questions of pupils that encourage them to reason and think more deeply about what they are learning.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor, leaders and governors have established a school that is making a positive difference to pupils' lives. As a result, Progress Schools Wigan is a good place to learn. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have created a school that welcomes vulnerable pupils and works successfully to remove their barriers to learning.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Firm, supportive boundaries help pupils feel secure enough to learn, begin to experience educational success and restore their self-confidence.
- The school actively promotes equality and diversity. This helps pupils to become considerate, respectful and tolerant. Pupils usually work well in each other's company and have many opportunities to develop consideration for others in the wider community. For example, remembering the victims of a recent bombing incident in the North West or learning about animal welfare and raising money for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
- The leadership team are experienced and knowledgeable. They accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their reflective, proactive approach is evident in a detailed school development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas needing further attention. Leaders have developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- The proprietor, senior leaders and the board of governors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school has developed an effective system to assess pupils' attainment and progress. This has recently been refined to provide leaders with a more detailed knowledge of pupils' skills and learning gaps. It is used effectively to assess each individual pupil's needs, including those that relate to their personal and emotional development, and attitudes to learning. The information gathered allows leaders to analyse pupils' progress regularly.
- However, teachers are less effective at using the assessment information to ensure that the planned activities precisely meet each pupil's individual needs and next steps in learning. Some pupils are not extended sufficiently.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which pupils find engaging. They benefit from a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography, current affairs and those related to developing their personal, social and emotional health and well-being. Teachers take opportunities to draw on pupils' interests and ensure that they see their learning as relevant. For example, all pupils study work skills and complete related qualifications. This has helped them build their sense of self-worth and has encouraged them to consider a broad range of possibilities for their future careers.
- The school offers a varied enrichment curriculum. It is enhanced by access to the exceptional facilities offered by the Youth Zone. Pupils can experience climbing, boxing, music, including sound recording, as well as benefiting from a fully equipped kitchen, sports hall, fitness gymnasium and a football pitch. Where appropriate, activities are taught by a specialist instructor. Pupils also enjoy a range of trips and visits, most

recently to Blackpool and to indoor bowling. These opportunities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all the school's activities and is a strength of the school. For example, in a history lesson about witches, the opportunity was taken to discuss stereotyping. Pupils responded well to this approach, learning to think of others and to reflect on their own views and attitudes. Overall, pupils mix together well and make a positive contribution to ensuring that the school environment is a calm and considerate place. Pupils learn about, and participate in, activities within the local and wider community, and they also raise funds for charities and develop strong British values, such as tolerance, respecting differences and the rule of law.
- At the time of the inspection, the school does not receive any pupil premium funding nor additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, the majority of pupils have an education and health care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. The lead for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been very effective in identifying the additional learning needs of pupils and allocating suitable support within school.
- The school benefits from a close working relationship with other Progress Schools. Leaders are reflective. They effectively apply their learning from one school across the other schools run by the company.
- Leaders have an effective working relationship with both the local authority and with Wigan Youth Zone. Progress Schools Wigan accommodates extremely vulnerable pupils at the request of the local authority. These pupils have found it very difficult to succeed in other school settings.

## **Governance**

- Governors share a whole-hearted commitment to improving pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Members of the small board of governors use the range of their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and make an active contribution to the life of the school.
- Governors know the school well and ensure that it remains compliant with all independent school standards. They support the headteacher in holding staff to account.
- Governors are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a high degree of expertise and knowledge of all matters relating to safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is

everyone's responsibility.

- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and the board of governors undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents on request. It is also available on the school's website.
- The school's pastoral support is excellent. Staff, overseen by the head of safeguarding and welfare, coordinate every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are kept safe and that their welfare needs are met.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders and staff have worked successfully to ensure that barriers to learning are broken down. The combination of teachers' knowledge of pupils and their ability to build their self-esteem has ensured that the vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Teaching is characterised by friendly, warm relationships between staff and pupils. Staff model and reinforce high expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. This helps pupils to work with purpose and engage in their learning.
- Teachers and support staff provide pupils with well-prepared, motivating activities which capture their interest. Personal, social and emotional development is taught discretely, but is also woven into every aspect of learning.
- The development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills is a high priority in the school. Wherever possible, the school links these subjects across the curriculum. For example, when studying modern day homelessness in current affairs, teachers made a link to English by including a poem about street children. This deepened pupils' understanding and gave them an added insight into some of the emotions that homeless people may be feeling.
- The information gathered about pupils is detailed but teachers do not always use it precisely enough to ensure that the tasks they set are sufficiently well matched to the individual pupil's ability and learning needs. Consequently, in a few lessons, although all pupils complete the work, some find tasks too easy, while others may just copy what is on the board because they find the activity too difficult. In both cases, these pupils are not always told how they could improve their work further so that they can move on in their learning.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils does not routinely deepen their knowledge and understanding. Teachers sometimes challenge pupils through their questioning. When this is the case, pupils are supported to make links between different areas of learning, which deepens their understanding. Too often, however, teachers' questioning of pupils is superficial. It does not encourage them to think through and reason. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for pupils to articulate their understanding of what they have

learned.

- In many areas of the curriculum, teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge. They draw on pupils' prior learning and often give real-life and relevant examples to explain what is being taught. Adults are skilful in maintaining pupils' focus on activities and are quick to pick up on those beginning to struggle.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their learning much more than they used to. This is because teachers make lessons fun and interesting, but also because they take the time to explain and listen to pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Both are central to the work of the school. Teachers' and other adults' thorough knowledge of pupils, allied to the strong relationships they build, ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment in which pupils rebuild their confidence.
- Staff are skilled at developing positive relationships with pupils, many of whom have faced and continue to face great personal challenges. Despite many of the pupils having presented with very challenging behaviour in their previous schools, staff have worked adeptly to help them to settle in to the school quickly. The large majority of pupils respond positively to the calm and orderly learning environment that has been created.
- Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff at the start of each day. Teachers and support staff use a short session at the beginning of the day to ensure that pupils are composed and ready to learn. This makes sure that lessons get off to as good a start as possible. As pupils explained: 'Teachers are nice to you; they listen. You feel they care about you.' Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in the way they engage with pupils. As a result, pupils feel relaxed and begin to enjoy school life.
- Staff actively promote discussions about difference in people and lifestyles. They also encourage conversations about current events. Despite the complex needs of some of the pupils, they respond well to this. Where they do not, staff skilfully challenge pupils' attitudes or perceptions. Where there are clashes between pupils, these are managed well by staff. For example, if a pupil is struggling to work in a group that day, they can opt to work in a different room. The flexibility of staff means that they will alter the times of day that they work with pupils if this is the best way to help them engage and learn.
- Parents who spoke with the inspector felt that the school had made a big difference to their child. All the parents spoken with say that their children were much happier than in previous schools. They said that they knew this because it 'was not so much of a battle' to get them to come to school. They commented that their child 'felt listened to' and was much calmer nowadays' and that 'we feel we have got our son back'. All felt that communication between home and school was excellent, commenting that it was 'great to hear good news as well as the bad'.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Considering the difficulties that pupils have in managing their behaviour, pupils conduct themselves well around school. The school is a calm, orderly place where pupils feel safe and able to learn.
- Movement around the school is carefully and sensitively managed by adults, so there is limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. At the same time, adults are mindful of giving pupils space. Pupils say that they feel more secure because of the presence of staff.
- Staff promote consistently high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond well. Pupils are increasingly self-regulating their behaviour by stepping away from potentially volatile situations.
- On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping pupils to calm down quickly and re-join the group. However, pupils are left in no doubt of behaviours which are unacceptable in the school. A very small minority of pupils whose behaviour poses a risk to themselves as well as others, are supported through bespoke programmes to better prepare them for learning.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and supported to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to high standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support that they receive from staff and appreciate the measured and caring approach that is adopted.
- Behaviour logs are well maintained and regularly analysed by senior leaders and governors. It is increasingly rare for a pupil to be excluded. Leaders only issue exclusions in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- Leaders have established meticulous and effective systems for monitoring absence. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils having good attendance. This has been particularly important because the vast majority of pupils who attend Progress Schools Wigan have had very poor attendance for much of their previous school careers. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance, and the virtues of regular attendance are regularly promoted. As a result, most pupils' attendance has rapidly improved on joining the school. Those pupils who still struggle are given effective support to improve their attendance.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils join the school with progress and attainment substantially below their peers. This is mainly due to their negative feelings and difficulties with engaging in previous schools. At Progress Schools Wigan, these pupils are now attending and beginning to enjoy their learning. Pupils are making good progress over time from their starting points.
- Where it is available, leaders use the assessment information available from the school that a pupil has left. They assess pupils when they join the school to establish their starting points. Pupils are then set very specific goals around their attitude and approach to learning, their personal, social and emotional development and their progress in

English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

- Leaders have devised a good-quality assessment system which is effective in capturing the individual progress of pupils in a range of areas. It allows leaders to keep a regular check on pupils to ensure that they make sufficient progress against their targets. Pupils feel involved in this process because teachers review and set targets with them regularly.
- Leaders have linked aspects of the curriculum to awards and accreditation. Creating a package of courses leading to qualifications has raised pupils' self-esteem and confidence in learning. Last year all pupils achieved at least two entry level qualifications in subjects such as applied science, English, mathematics, health care and ICT. As one parent said of her son, 'I never thought he would get a qualification. Now he has.'
- Although most pupils make at least the progress that leaders expect of them, a few do not achieve as well as they could. This is because teachers do not use assessment information well enough to closely match some activities to pupils' individual learning needs and to challenge those that could be extended further.
- The vast majority of pupils have an education and health care plan for their social, emotional and mental health needs. Over time, this group of pupils make good progress.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress in those areas that were barriers to learning in their previous school. For example, pupils make noticeable gains in their emotional development and in their ability to make positive choices about their behaviour. This has helped them feel more positive about school and has allowed them to begin to experience success in their learning.
- The school provides good careers guidance. All pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and to explore their aspirations. They are helped to make informed decisions about how to pursue their goals for the future. The curriculum ensures that pupils develop work-related skills and benefit from a range of visitors, including those that are arranged by the Youth Zone, who talk to pupils about different careers. The school has Year 11 pupils for the first time this academic year. Leaders have worked closely with pupils to prepare them for the next stage of education. In the first instance, they have drawn on pupils' interests and aspirations to set up work experience placements.

## School details

Unique reference number	145187
DfE registration number	359/6002
Inspection number	10053740

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 category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	13 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	James Madine
Executive Headteacher/Headteacher	Charlotte Barton/Sion Hughes
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,000 – £36,000
Telephone number	01942 231 801
Website	<a href="http://www.progress-schools.co.uk">www.progress-schools.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:wiganPS@progress-schools.co.uk">wiganPS@progress-schools.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- This small independent special school is located within the premises of a purpose-built facility for Wigan Youth Zone. The building offers a range of additional facilities, including a climbing wall, gymnasium, sports hall and spaces for performing and creative arts.
- The school can provide full-time education for up to 35 male or female pupils, aged between 13 to 16 years. It presently caters for eight pupils. Current pupils are in both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Pupils have previously been disengaged from education, have been permanently excluded, or have been at risk of exclusion from education because of behavioural difficulties.

- Most pupils have SEN and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school works closely with Wigan local authority, which is the main referral route for placing pupils at the school.
- The school aims 'to provide high-level supportive and inspirational teaching to 13- to 16-year-olds at key stages 3 and 4 to ensure positive progression and readiness for the world of further education, work-based learning or employment'.
- The school is one of seven other similar schools located across the country. Progress Schools Limited are the proprietors. As well as the executive headteacher and headteacher, there is a chief executive officer and a managing director with responsibility for leadership. The school also has a governing board of directors.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in classes. She also observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. She observed pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and head of safeguarding and student welfare, and the operational executive. She also spoke with the lead for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The inspector spoke with the chief executive officer, who represented the proprietorship of the school and the governing board.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke informally with pupils around school and discussed with some pupils their opinions about the school and their learning.
- The lead inspector took account of four hard-copy responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. However, the inspector spoke on the telephone with three parents during the inspection.
- School policies and other documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence, including minutes from meetings of the management committee, information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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