

Progress Schools – Carlisle

7 Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1EJ

Inspection dates

26–28 February 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and staff are ambitious for pupils. They work effectively together to provide good-quality alternative provision for pupils whose needs are not met in mainstream schools. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Staff successfully achieve the school's vision to support pupils into further education or employment, and to better their life chances.
- The headteacher has created a positive culture in school where staff and pupils feel valued.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It provides pupils with a range of experiences and they acquire useful qualifications. It is adapted effectively to meet pupils' specific needs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength and promoted very effectively in dedicated lessons. Pupils develop a good understanding of how they can become positive participants in modern society.
- Teaching is good. It is particularly strong in information technology, science, citizenship, personal, vocational and work-related learning. Pupils make very good progress in these subjects.
- Pupils' progress is not as strong in English and mathematics as it is in other subjects.
- In some classes, pupils are not taught systematically about features of different types of writing and they are not supported to develop a wider vocabulary.
- In mathematics, pupils have limited opportunities to apply and develop their skills in activities that motivate them.
- Pupils' physical, mental and emotional well-being is a key focus in the work of the school. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, in and out of school.
- Pupils get on well and say bullying does not happen. They develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning during their time at school. However, the behaviour policy is not applied consistently and this occasionally reduces pupils' involvement in learning.
- Engagement in learning is also limited for a few pupils who have poor attendance and punctuality.
- Executive leaders and directors effectively oversee the work of the school.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice. However, feedback from school leaders, following checks on teaching, is not precise enough to pinpoint precisely what staff can do to improve.

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 associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching and learning pinpoints what teachers need to do to improve teaching and strengthen pupils' progress in writing and mathematics.
- Promote pupils' greater engagement in learning by:
 - ensuring all staff apply the behaviour policy as intended in order to de-escalate potential issues and avoid removal of pupils from class
 - raising attendance further and improving pupils' punctuality.
- Improve teaching and learning in writing and mathematics by:
 - using the strengths in practice in other subjects to plan teaching that motivates and enthuses pupils
 - planning teaching that systematically builds on pupils' knowledge and skills
 - developing pupils' vocabulary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive leadership team, which oversees the work of schools within the Progress Schools group, is ambitious for pupils and quality assures the work of the Carlisle school effectively. Leaders' vision to support pupils to participate in further education and better their life chances is shared by school staff. They and the proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met, including those that were unmet at the unannounced inspection in May 2017.
- The headteacher of the school has created a positive atmosphere where staff feel appreciated and well supported. Pupils feel valued and able to learn in a non-threatening environment. They say they find the small groups and friendly atmosphere in school reassuring.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and main priorities for further improvement. Self-evaluation is based on a range of evidence, including information from checks made by executive leaders and external consultants. Training for staff is planned well to meet their needs and support school improvement. Executive leaders facilitate the sharing of effective practice across all schools in the Progress Schools group and support staff to attend courses.
- The quality of teaching and learning is checked through lesson observations, scrutiny of teachers' planning and the evaluation of pupils' attainment in standardised assessments. Staff have appropriate general targets for improvement which relate to national teaching standards, school improvement priorities and their training needs.
- Although leaders regularly observe teaching and look at pupils' work, feedback following these activities is not precise enough to pinpoint what teachers and other staff can do to improve their practice. This leads to some variation in the impact of teaching from class to class, which is particularly evident in pupils' work in mathematics and their writing in English.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of meaningful experiences and supports them to gain useful qualifications. The core curriculum focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in literacy, mathematics, information technology and science. It is supplemented with very effective personal, social and health education, vocational courses and work-related learning. The curriculum successfully equips pupils with the personal, learning and employability skills that enable them to participate positively in society on leaving the school.
- The curriculum is further adapted to support each pupil's specific personal and learning needs. Many pupils join the school after periods of absence from mainstream education or from specialist provision. For some, a reduced timetable helps them settle into school and get used to routines. Many pupils benefit from individual tuition, which enables them to experience success and grow in confidence.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively in discrete lessons and is a strength of the school. Pupils are explicitly taught about other faiths and cultures. They learn about British values and global events, and thoughtfully debate sensitive and controversial issues. Pupils are encouraged to express their views

and ask potentially difficult questions in safe surroundings.

- Pupils gain level 2 qualifications in a range of units that focus on British values and equality and diversity. They have a good understanding of the Equality Act and show respect for people with protected characteristics. They develop a good understanding of how they can become positive participants in modern society.
- Pupils participate in a range of enrichment activities which supports their learning and personal development. They undertake various projects to raise funds for local and international charities. For example, they have baked and sold cakes, participated in sponsored runs and made and sold various products. The curriculum is also enriched with trips out and activities to support work-related learning.
- Highly effective partnership working with other schools is a strength in provision. Leaders have improved links with referring schools since the last inspection. They make sure they receive detailed information to inform the initial assessment of pupils' learning and personal needs. Where pupils are dual registered, daily contact and weekly reports ensure that both schools are aware of pupils' attendance and their engagement and progress. The sharing of information supports the development of pupils' personal targets on both sites.
- Parents and carers who made their views known are positive about the school. They say their children are happy to be in school and make good progress. They have confidence in school leaders, saying, for example, 'they are approachable and deal with any issues straight away'.

Governance

- Governance is provided through an executive board of directors which oversees the work of all schools in the Progress Schools group.
- Directors are highly committed to supporting pupils to develop effective personal, academic and work-related skills. Their aim is to enable pupils to grow in self-esteem, develop positive behaviour and participate in society fully on leaving school. Directors have relevant knowledge and skills to quality assure the work of the school and fulfil their vision.
- Directors have a good understanding of the school's performance and clear plans to develop the provision further. They check provision and challenge school leaders effectively. They invest in staff training to make sure staff are equipped to bring about improvements and support pupils' all-round development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff and suitability of managers meet requirements.
- Leaders and all staff are vigilant in ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in school. As well as ensuring this, staff teach pupils how to safeguard themselves outside school. Staff have completed training relevant to their roles and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. They are appropriately trained in safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty, health and safety, first aid, fire safety and, should the need arise, positive handling.
- Leaders engage with a range of external agencies and organisations to promote the

welfare and safety of pupils beyond school. For example, leaders have commissioned the services of external organisations to support pupils at risk of involvement in criminal activity or gangs. They work with local authorities and social care to ensure that pupils who are at risk are safeguarded.

- The health and safety of pupils at alternative provision and work placements is checked rigorously. Leaders carry out thorough health and safety checks and check pupils' attendance.
- The safeguarding and related policies take account of current government requirements. The safeguarding policy is available on the website. The school premises are safe and secure.
- Leaders engage effectively with parents, carers and local authorities to make sure all pupils are supported and safe. Any concerns about pupils' well-being are discussed immediately to ensure a comprehensive and consistent approach to minimise risks and keep pupils safe. Pupils' attendance is tracked carefully and absences are followed up promptly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils typically have gaps in their learning when they join the school and many have additional needs. Pupils' prior learning and personal needs are assessed thoroughly on entry, in liaison with the pupils' previous school or setting. An individual education development plan (IEDP) is developed for every pupil and is used effectively to guide their learning.
- Teaching is planned effectively to address pupils' personal targets and support them in gaining useful qualifications. The IEDPs identify appropriate learning and behavioural targets and strategies to support their achievement.
- Strengths in teaching include the explicit development of pupils' personal and social skills, vocational and work-related learning, citizenship and careers education. Teaching is also strong in science and information technology. Topics and activities in these subjects capture pupils' interest and result in useful qualifications to support their further education.
- English teaching is better in some classes than in others. Although, overall, pupils make good progress from their low starting points, they are sometimes not well motivated by the tasks they are given. Pupils use limited vocabulary and are not taught systematically about the key language features of different types of writing in some classes.
- In mathematics, pupils complete regular assessments online which show they make reasonable progress from their low starting points. However, they have limited opportunities to apply and develop their skills in activities that interest them.
- Leaders are building up a stock of good-quality reading materials to promote a love of reading among pupils and support their literacy development. This initiative is at an early stage but is beginning to have an impact in increasing the range of pupils' reading. Pupils are supported to develop and use their reading skills effectively for functional reading, for example to access information online.
- The promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills has been a priority since the last inspection. Speaking and listening is integrated into subjects across the curriculum. Pupils

develop more effective speaking and listening skills through presentations of their work, discussion, role play and debate.

- Information technology is used effectively to support teaching and learning. Pupils use computers confidently to access research, complete online assessments and record some of their work. Teachers use technology effectively to illustrate and exemplify learning.
- Pupils are positive about the teaching they receive. They say, for example, 'the smaller groups mean you get more help and attention', and 'teachers take an interest in you and help you learn'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive, constructive relationships between staff and pupils are a key factor in the school's success. The focus is on developing and rewarding positive behaviour. For example, pupils' participation in end-of-term trips is dependent on their effort and positive engagement throughout the term.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being are a key focus in the work of the school. Pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy is promoted effectively through specific lessons. Their well-being is enhanced through the school's pastoral systems. Pupils gain a number of useful qualifications in citizenship, internet safety, and physical, mental and sexual health awareness.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy in a range of situations, in and out of school. For example, leaders bring experts into school to help pupils understand the risks associated with gang involvement, extremism and the use of social media.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say, for example, 'everyone gets on' and there is no bullying. Records of incidents are comprehensive. They show that there are disruptions to teaching and learning at times, but there have not been any incidents of threatening or bullying behaviour.
- Pupils receive good-quality, impartial careers information and advice from independent external advisers. They are well informed about careers and courses suited to their interests and abilities.
- Pupils receive highly effective careers education in school. They develop work-related skills in a range of activities, such as planning projects, raising funds for charities and participating in mock interviews. They are supported in writing curriculum vitae and job applications. Pupils take part in work experience placements to enhance their learning and broaden their skills, for example in farming, gardening, construction, and hair and beauty. Parents are involved in supporting and discussing careers options.
- Leaders ensure the safety of pupils attending alternative providers and work experience. Alternative providers attest to the fact that thorough health and safety checks are carried out by school staff before pupils are placed with them. Pupils' attendance is monitored closely and is good.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning during their time at school. Pupils typically have had low levels of engagement and behavioural difficulties in their previous schools. They become increasingly motivated and cooperative in lessons as they get to know and respect the expectations of staff.
- Some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour when they first join the school. However, the behaviour code is not applied consistently, and as intended, by school leaders in some lessons. There is a wide discrepancy in the number of behavioural incidents recorded in different classes and some pupils are frequently removed. Their engagement in learning is consequently reduced.
- The attendance of the majority of pupils improves as they begin to appreciate the benefits the school provides for them. However, a small minority of pupils continue to have persistent absence, which has an impact on the school's overall attendance figures. Punctuality of by a small number of pupils is also poor, meaning they miss some morning lessons.
- Fixed-term exclusion is used rarely, only as a last resort and for short periods of time. Leaders make sure that any fixed-term exclusions are made in discussion with parents to ensure the safety of pupils. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past three years.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' time in school varies immensely. Some are in school for a short respite period before returning to mainstream school or an alternative setting and others may complete a couple of years. The majority of pupils are working below the national curriculum standards expected for their age when they join the school. Some have gaps in their knowledge due to periods of missed education.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress from their various starting points during their time at school. Pupils make very good progress in their personal skills and their understanding of citizenship. They add to their knowledge, learn new skills and attain a range of qualifications in information technology, science, work-related learning and vocational subjects.
- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 gained between four and 10 qualifications in science, information technology and various vocational and BTEC awards. Vocational qualifications range from sports awards to health and social care, retail, and hair and beauty. Some pupils also gained qualifications in functional skills English and mathematics, but pass rates were relatively low compared to other subjects. The low pass rate was due partly to the fact that pupils did not turn up for examinations.
- Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve pupils' access to qualifications in English and mathematics. Pupils currently in school are able to take English and mathematics examinations at several times across the year in order to build up their qualifications. There is more of a focus on speaking and listening across the curriculum, giving pupils access to a qualification in functional English.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is improving but still lags behind their progress in other subjects. Pupils are not as motivated by the teaching in these subjects

as they are in other subjects.

- The most able pupils who have the ability to attain GCSE qualifications are supported to take international GCSEs. The school supports them by securing specialist tuition.
- Pupils' very good gains in their personal skills, their qualifications and practical experience in vocational subjects, their improving literacy and numeracy skills and wide-ranging work-related skills prepare them well for their futures.
- Over the past three years, the vast majority of pupils who left the school in Year 11 have sustained places in further education, employment or apprenticeships. The school is still supporting the very small number of pupils who left in 2018 and are not currently in education, employment or training.

School details

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|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 135555 |
| DfE registration number | 909/6097 |
| Inspection number | 10067902 |

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.

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| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 13 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 21 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 4 |
| Proprietor | Progress Schools Limited |
| Chair | James Madine |
| Executive Headteacher | Charlotte Barton |
| School Headteacher | Faye Skinner |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £12,000 to £32,000 |
| Telephone number | 01228 586004 |
| Website | www.progress-schools.co.uk |
| Email address | carlisle@progress-schools.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5–7 July 2016 |

Information about this school

- Progress Schools Limited is a national organisation with independent secondary schools based across England. The Carlisle school is registered for up to 40 male and female pupils aged 13 to 16.
- Pupils are referred from local secondary schools or Cumbria local authority.
- There are currently 21 pupils on roll. Nine pupils are registered solely with Progress Schools, Carlisle. The rest of the pupils are dual registered with mainstream local schools or the Gillford Centre pupil referral unit. Most of the dual registered pupils attend full

time. Four of the dual registered pupils attend part time and spend the rest of the week at mainstream schools.

- Cohorts are changeable as pupils join the school at various times during the year from the age of 13 years. Most pupils stay for short periods of time; a minority attend full time up to three years. Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to disrupted education previously.
- Currently, 5% of pupils have an education, health and care plan and 25% are in receipt of support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- A small proportion of pupils are in the care of local authorities.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school was judged to be good at the last standard inspection in July 2016. An unannounced inspection was carried out in May 2017 at the request of the registration authority for independent schools following concerns about safeguarding. There were unmet standards at that inspection. The school met all of the independent school standards that were checked during the progress monitoring inspection in December 2017.
- Two pupils attend alternative provision where they learn vocational skills for one or two days a week. These are Susan's Farm and Railway Gardens.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined the premises and observed the school's work. Teaching and learning was observed in each class and pupils' written work was scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke with pupils during teaching sessions and in meetings to gain their views on the work of the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including action planning, self-evaluation, monitoring of teaching and learning, tracking of pupils' progress, safeguarding policies and procedures, health and safety checks and risk assessments. School policies were seen.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, regional headteacher, school headteacher, teaching staff and representatives of the proprietor and executive board of directors.
- The inspector spoke by telephone with providers of work experience, alternative providers used by the school and leaders from secondary schools who have pupils registered at Progress Schools, Carlisle.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed by five staff who returned questionnaires and of parents who made their views known. There was only one response to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. The inspector spoke with two parents by telephone.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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