

Progress School

Unit 3, Spearmast Industrial Estate, Land End Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP12 4JG

Inspection dates

9–11 May 2017

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	Satisfactory

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, directors and staff share a commitment to going the 'extra mile' to prepare pupils as well as possible for their future lives. As a result, the school is improving and all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and directors have wisely focused on providing the right training, challenge and support to staff. As a result, teaching is good and pupils achieve well across the curriculum.
- The school rightly focuses on furthering pupils' personal development. Consequently, over time, most pupils' motivation, self-esteem, attendance and confidence improve considerably.
- Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They support pupils to make good choices and improve their behaviour.
- Staff are adept in asking pupils questions in lessons, checking their understanding and developing their learning. This enables them to address pupils' misconceptions effectively.
- Last year, the vast majority of leavers went to college or began an apprenticeship. Pupils receive very effective and personalised careers education and guidance that helps them to take appropriate next steps.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs well. Nevertheless, leaders rightly recognise that they can further develop provision for pupils' physical education.
- Occasionally, staff use resources in lessons that are less interesting or relevant to pupils. When this happens, pupils' interest reduces.
- Staff do not always demonstrate a strong understanding of pupils' different learning needs, or use this to provide activities that match pupils' needs closely.
- Leaders gather a lot of information about pupils' behaviour and achievement. However, they do not always make the best use of this information to increase the impact of their work on pupils' achievement and personal development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and directors make the best use of information systems to check, improve and demonstrate the impact of their work on pupils' personal development and achievement
 - the curriculum for physical education continues to develop so that it is as strong as it is for other subjects.
- Further improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teaching addresses pupils' individual learning needs more closely
 - staff make the best use of resources to motivate pupils and support their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, the chief executive officer and the directors are highly ambitious for the school. At the heart of everyone's work is a commitment to preparing all pupils for their next steps and going the 'extra mile' to make the best impact on their future lives. Staff share these aims and work very well together to build strong relationships with pupils that help them to start to succeed. As a result, the school has improved since the last inspection and has been described by many as being 'like a family'.
- Leaders have wisely focused on providing the right training, challenge and support to staff. An external adviser checks the quality of teaching and learning systematically. Staff value this helpful feedback, along with further training and advice from health professionals, as it enables them to improve their ability to help pupils. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and pupils' behavioural needs are met very well.
- Strong relationships ensure that pupils' behaviour and personal development improve during their time at Progress. Leaders support staff well so that they can build important trusting relationships with pupils. Daily meetings enable staff to share successes and ways that they can adapt their support and provision for pupils. Leaders use this to make important changes to timetables so that all pupils have the best opportunities to learn.
- The headteacher and the chief executive officer have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and the requirements for independent schools. They know what the school can do better, and the school improvement plan is rightly targeted on these aspects. As a result, all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders ensure the pupils' special educational needs are met well. Each pupil has an individual education and development plan that correctly identifies important next steps in their learning. The senior tutor on each site supports pupils to set their own targets and review the progress that they make at appropriate intervals. This helps pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are promoted well. Special projects such as the 'social media enterprise project', a careers curriculum, and wider experiences such as visits to a local mosque, support this learning.
- Pupils work towards a range of qualifications, such as functional skills and GCSEs, in English, mathematics and information technology. Pupils are highly motivated by lessons in sport and active leisure, health and social care, and child care and also achieve BTEC National Diplomas in these subjects. As a result, pupils leave the school with qualifications and skills that enable them to continue their education at college or in an apprenticeship.
- The curriculum provides pupils with appropriate experience across a broad range of subjects. Leaders have set out detailed schemes of work that are suitable for pupils' ages and attainment. This includes providing a relevant curriculum for Year 9 pupils that underpins this learning. Therefore, the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the age range is extended to 13 to 16 years of age. Nevertheless, leaders rightly recognise that they can further develop the curriculum, particularly for physical education, and have already taken steps to do so.

- Extra-curricular opportunities enable pupils to explore their interests and develop their skills further. Enrichment activities such as boxing, charity bake and brew sales and a furniture restoration project build on pupils' learning. The school also provides a range of trips for pupils who attend school often and behave well. Go-karting, tree-top adventures and ice-skating are popular with pupils and motivate them to succeed.
- Leaders have put effective systems in place to enable them to monitor pupils' behaviour, attitudes and achievement. They rightly recognise that this information is useful and have started to analyse some of it. However, leaders and directors do not yet use this information enough to check or improve the impact of their work to further pupils' personal development or achievement.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the school. They value the high levels of communication and the way that staff approach them. One parent said, 'They speak my language – I feel understood.'

Governance

- The board of directors has effective oversight of the school's work. For example, they check that safeguarding meets requirements and ensure that leaders have sufficient funds to support their work.
- The managing director, chief executive officer, and other senior staff in the company provide helpful support to leaders. In addition to this, network meetings are a source of advice and ideas to improve teaching and learning that benefit staff at all levels. As a result, staff feel well supported and valued.
- The board of directors provides some challenge to senior leaders. For example, directors ask for and receive information about pupils' attendance at the school so that they can ensure improvements are taking place. High expectations from directors, leaders and all staff ensure that pupils' rates of attendance increase over time. Nevertheless, directors acknowledge that they do not yet provide the same level of challenge to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' welfare. There is a culture of vigilance because leaders ensure that safeguarding pupils is everyone's priority. Staff receive regular training and updates that are tailored to the school, such as how to prevent child sexual exploitation and understand the dangers of children missing in education. The safeguarding policy meets current requirements and is published on the school's website. This sets out clear guidance for staff. Consequently, staff know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.
- The school works closely with a range of other professionals and families to help keep pupils safe. Staff keep a close eye on pupils and take action to address any unsafe behaviours or situations. Wherever possible and appropriate, they work with families to provide the right support. This is particularly the case for pupils' absence. Staff provide effective challenge and support to families to increase pupils' attendance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff take the time to build strong relationships with pupils that support their learning. They talk about pupils' likes and dislikes to prompt them to think about what they have learned. For example, in a sports and leisure lesson the tutor helped the pupil to apply his recently acquired knowledge of a balanced diet to consider his own diet. Quickly, the pupil made the link saying, 'It's given me something to think about.'
- Pupils have lots of opportunities to develop their skills in English and mathematics throughout the curriculum. Pupils' work shows that staff challenge them to use appropriate grammar, spelling and mathematical skills in the range of subjects. Consequently, pupils, including those who have recently joined the school, make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Staff set high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons. They show determination and persevere in their requests, using praise well so that pupils behave appropriately and finish their tasks. As a result, pupils complete work to a good standard.
- In class, staff use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the tutor set a pupil a challenging task to complete a probability tree. The tutor used questions well to support the pupil to think about his approach to the work and to spot and address his own mistakes.
- Staff use their deep knowledge of pupils to provide them with just the right amount of support so that they participate in lessons and develop appropriate behaviours and attitudes for learning. They wisely draw on the support of other professionals to enhance this work. However, staff do not always demonstrate such a strong understanding of pupils' different learning needs and use this to provide activities that match their needs closely.
- Staff make some good use of resources to support pupils' learning. This was evident in an art lesson where a pupil was inspired by digital images of hybrid animals to create his own mythical creature. However, occasionally, staff use resources that are less interesting or relevant to pupils. When this happens, pupils' interest in learning reduces.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff work tirelessly to form warm and trusting relationships with pupils and families to promote pupils' personal development and welfare. Staff are highly effective at supporting pupils' well-being, including the most vulnerable and those pupils who arrive at school not always ready to learn.
- Careers guidance is effective. Pupils receive impartial and appropriate advice and support on an individual basis as well as in regular careers lessons. As a result, pupils are well equipped to move onto a range of apprenticeships and college places once they leave school. Parents and Buckinghamshire County Council value how staff ensure that pupils are prepared and successful in attending college and apprenticeship interviews.

- Leaders and staff provide many opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe. A wide range of speakers visit the school regularly to talk with pupils about their physical health, emotional well-being, and making safe choices online and when not on the school site. Pupils also enjoy visiting the local fire station to learn about the consequences of dangerous driving.
- The majority of pupils become more interested in and focused on their learning over time. When this happens, pupils show a good level of pride in their work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour improves when they attend Progress School. Staff have clear expectations but also show high levels of patience and endeavour when supporting pupils to make good choices. Pupils mostly behave well in lessons.
- Breakfast club and lunchtimes are calm. Staff work hard to create a 'family' atmosphere around the kitchens and dining tables. Staff talk with pupils about their evenings and their interests, and take every opportunity to build good relationships with pupils that promote good behaviour around the school.
- Staff use clear sanctions, including exclusion, effectively. The proportion of pupils excluded from school declines over time because staff support pupils' personal and social development well.
- Many pupils start Progress School with very low levels of attendance. Last year, the school was successful in ensuring that almost all pupils came to school more often than they had previously. Leaders challenge and support pupils and their families so that their attendance reaches a good level.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with very negative experiences of school. Many do not want to attend. However, over time, most pupils' motivation, self-esteem, attendance and confidence improve considerably. This is because staff understand pupils' behavioural needs very well. They use this to provide highly effective support that furthers each pupils' personal development and participation in learning.
- Those leaving the school at the end of Year 11 are well prepared for the next stage in their education or training. Last year, almost all pupils achieved qualifications such as certificates or GCSEs in English, mathematics and information technology. This included those who had only attended the school for a short period of time. Staff set high expectations for pupils and are determined that they will achieve as much as possible.
- Last year, the vast majority of pupils who left the school continued their education at college or began an apprenticeship. Leaders ensure that pupils receive very effective and personalised careers education and guidance that helps them to take appropriate next steps.

- From their very different starting points, most pupils currently at the school are making good progress in English, mathematics and information technology. This includes those with lower attainment and those who are most able. This is because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and give them the chance to practise these skills in most lessons.
- Pupils' exercise books and work portfolios show that they make good progress across a range of subjects. The effective curriculum enables them to achieve well in subjects such as history, health and social care, and science.

School details

Unique reference number	135604
DfE registration number	825/6040
Inspection number	10006103

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 special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Progress Schools Ltd
Chair	Sandra Kirkham
Headteacher	Charlotte Barton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,675–£16,575
Telephone number	01494 418968
Website	www.progress-schools.co.uk
Email address	info@progress-schools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school, now known as Progress School, opened in September 2007 as Education Youth Service Ltd. The school continues to be based on two sites, one in High Wycombe and one in Station Road, Chesham. Progress Schools Limited took over the school along with several others belonging to Education Youth Service Ltd in January 2016. The Department for Education (DfE) was notified of this change.
- The school has places for up to 65 pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 years who have severe emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.

- The previous inspection of the school, under the name of Education Youth Service Ltd took place in October 2012. At this time, the school was judged to be satisfactory.
- The majority of pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have challenging behaviours and require a high level of support. Most have had gaps in their education and have been excluded from other schools. Some pupils have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorders and autistic spectrum conditions.
- The school works closely with Buckinghamshire County Council, who places the majority of pupils at the school. Leaders have also forged strong links with professionals from health, police and social care.
- Pupils join the school at different times and with very different abilities. Most pupils currently at the school joined in this academic year, over one quarter have joined since January 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The aim of the school is: 'We support the potential to achieve.'
- The board of directors is responsible for the governance of the school. The board has two non-executive members who have relevant educational experience.

Information about this inspection

- At the request of the DfE, inspectors considered the school's request to extend the age range from 14 to 16 years to 13 to 16 years during this inspection.
- Inspectors visited lessons on both sites and spoke informally to pupils. Pupils' work was also scrutinised.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, staff members and some pupils. A meeting was held with the chief executive officer. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a health worker and the chair of the board of directors. Inspectors also held a telephone call with a representative from Buckinghamshire County Council.
- There were no responses, and no written comments, to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors spoke to four parents on the telephone.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents. This included the school's improvement plans, information about the curriculum, safeguarding documents, records of behaviour incidents, individual education and development plans and pupils' achievement information.

Inspection team

Caroline Dulong, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Cole

Her Majesty's Inspector

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