

# Progress School

Gough Lane, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancashire PR5 6AQ

## Inspection dates

25–27 April 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The senior leaders of the school have established an environment in which pupils can flourish despite the barriers to learning they experience. They are demonstrating the capacity for rapid and sustained improvement.
- At the heart of the school's success is the belief that all pupils have rights and that they should be valued and listened to, whatever their learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Positive behaviour support is used very successfully to identify the origins of challenging behaviour that many of the pupils exhibit. The focus is to teach appropriate alternative responses that the pupils can adopt.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved very significantly in the last year and are now good. The curriculum is carefully designed to meet pupils' needs precisely.
- The new proprietors have ensured that the staff team is well organised. Funding is targeted at meeting the needs of individual children and there are very high pupil-staff ratios.
- A key strength of the school is the way in which pupils' communication skills are successfully developed. As a result, pupils' fears and anxieties decrease and their confidence in adults and their ability to cope in everyday life grow significantly.
- Policies and procedures to ensure that pupils' safety and welfare are implemented effectively. Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The sixth form is good. Individualised learning programmes are bespoke to meet the needs of the pupils, although leaders realise more could be done to support pupils to the transition to adulthood.
- Parents and carers value the work of the school immensely. They say that their children's needs are met and they can see great levels of progress.
- Outcomes for pupils are good, but leaders and teachers recognise that there is still more they can do to improve the quality of the school so that all pupils can reach their full potential.

### 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?**

- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
  - teachers are not afraid to occasionally let pupils fail so as to enhance their resilience
  - teachers always set ambitious learning goals
  - teachers match the curriculum more closely to the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils will need when they leave school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The senior leaders' passionate commitment to the pupils and parents is the driving force behind success at this school.
- Leaders have introduced a systematic and thorough method of checking pupils' learning and progress. This has led to much-accelerated progress across academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Senior staff closely monitor the daily one-to-one sessions and small-group interactions and provide excellent advice and support to teachers and support staff.
- Leaders have accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school and set ambitious targets for improvement. They have started to eradicate weaknesses.
- All staff feel extremely proud to work at the school. It is an extremely challenging and specialist environment in which to work and they appreciate the highly effective support they receive from leaders.
- An individual approach to pupils' needs has been adopted to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate. Pupils' responsiveness, curiosity, anticipation, persistence and resilience are carefully mapped against a range of useful learning activities.
- Most pupils do not use verbal means of communication. However, the school ensures that this does not mean that they are unable to communicate their feelings.
- The school's systems to assess pupils' progress are outstanding because they are informed by such a wide range of information provided by professionals from across several disciplines, including speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted effectively through the individualised curriculum and trips and visits. The most able pupils have the opportunity to learn about fundamental British values.
- The welfare, safety and security of pupils are given the highest priority. All safeguarding policies and procedures are in line with current government guidance and available on the school website.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They explained that there is usually a dramatic positive impact on progress when a child joins the school.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.

### Governance

- Governance is very strong. The proprietors of the school know its strengths very well and since they took over the ownership of the school have taken swift action to ensure that staff are well organised and supported. The school's timetable, curriculum and staffing levels are closely matched to meet the needs of pupils.
- The proprietors are beginning to model the outstanding practice found in other schools in the group to improve even further the quality of teaching and learning.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leaders have undertaken effective training at the required level.
- Staff receive regular training to update them on how to keep children safe and have read and understood the appropriate key documents on keeping children safe in education.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching is good across the school. The very high staff-to-pupil ratio is a key element used to support the learning and behaviour of individual pupils. Pupils are usually not able to communicate verbally and can exhibit severe and complex behaviours that are a barrier to learning. However, teachers successfully overcome these barriers in most cases.
- There are individualised learning rooms that pupils can use when they feel anxious or need space. Classrooms are well equipped.
- Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and combine this with specialist teaching techniques to ensure that pupils are provided with achievable targets. On a few occasions, targets are not challenging enough. Staff do not always allow pupils to experience both success and failure and as a result build their resilience.
- Pupils have extremely low starting points in terms of academic attainment but make good progress in interpreting signs and symbols and developing communication skills. The most able are able to participate in a range of more-traditional subjects, including science, mathematics, English, art, geography and history.
- Teachers successfully focus on teaching the sounds of letters and the alphabet to those pupils where this is appropriate. Pupils make good progress in reading skills, although their progress is not always as consistently good when they are asked to write and formulate letters. The most able develop good basic numeracy skills and social awareness.
- There are good learning resources, such as the multisensory room and specialist equipment, to enable a wide variety of learning activities to take place.
- Attendance levels are very high, and in the last year pupils have sustained much longer periods of attendance during the day due to the much improved curriculum offer. There are now very few occasions when pupils refuse to engage in learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Policies and procedures to promote the welfare of pupils are appropriate and implemented consistently by staff. Despite the challenging behaviour of most pupils, the atmosphere around school is calm and orderly. As a result, pupils' anxiety levels reduce and they enjoy being at school.
- Pupils' behaviour is very complex and linked to a range of autistic spectrum disorders, but they all exhibit very challenging behaviour at times. They are provided with a range of

focused-learning activities that enables them to reduce the frequency and severity of the challenge and replace it with more acceptable forms of communication and gaining attention.

- One carer, whose child had previously very limited social and emotional skills, typified the views of most parents when he said, 'What is happening at this school is miraculous compared with what had come before.'
- Pupils are able to express independently, often for the first time, a wide range of emotions, including humour, pride, sadness and love, with adults who are prepared to listen and understand.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All pupils enter the school with complex and challenging behaviour. In almost all cases the prevalence of this behaviour and levels of anxiety and self-harm decreases.
- Staff use praise at every opportunity to reinforce good behaviour. However, on a few occasions they do not challenge pupils sufficiently to make even faster social progress.
- Pupils are now encouraged to recognise their peers and develop friendships, but this is still in the early stages of development and staff realise that learning would be even more effective if more opportunities were provided for pupils to interact.
- Pupils have been given better opportunities to socialise at the beginning of the day and at lunchtime. There have been no incidents of bullying and no exclusions.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected for their age because of their cognitive abilities and autistic spectrum conditions. Around two-thirds of pupils at the time of the inspection did not use spoken language to communicate. Progress towards their personalised targets from pupils' different starting points is good.
- The most able pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils occasionally gain certificates in a number of leisure and life-skills-based subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The proportion of girls who attend the school is lower than that of boys, but girls and boys make equally good progress.
- School records show that pupils on roll at the end of Key Stage 4 usually stay on into the sixth form. Pupils make a seamless transition to the sixth form and evidence is used to create bespoke learning programmes for them.

## **Sixth form provision**

**Good**

- Outcomes for pupils in the sixth form are good. Each student has a personal learning pathway. This is usually closely matched to transition to adult life, but staff recognise that this is not always followed through consistently to measure the impact of learning on life after school.
- Learners and their parents receive impartial advice, including potential work and further-

education options for sixth-form students. As a result, a number of students progress successfully into further training.

- School records show that all students who start the sixth form are able to stay until the end of their studies. Progression to adult life is carefully managed by the school, although better partnership working with referring local authorities would make this transition even more successful.

## School details

Unique reference number	131138
DfE registration number	888/6030
Inspection number	10012964

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	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	7
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	4
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Ltd
Chair	Not applicable
Principal	Ms Wendy Sparling
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,430–106,708
Telephone number	01772 334832
Website	<a href="http://www.progressschool.co.uk">www.progressschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:juliecrawshaw@priorygroup.com">juliecrawshaw@priorygroup.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2013

## Information about this school

- Progress school is an independent specialist day school registered for up to 12 boys and girls aged six to 19 who have severe and complex autistic spectrum conditions and associated complex learning needs, challenging behaviour and associated anxiety.
- Children come from several local authorities and most are looked after by them, although they live in local children's homes.

- The school became part of the Priory Group in December 2015. The group also operates residential children's homes in the area, where some of the children may stay.
- There are 15 staff drawn from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Pupils are provided with a minimum of one-to-one support throughout the day and are also supported by staff from the homes. Learning is organised on an individual basis or in very small groups.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan to support their special educational needs.
- The school does not use any alternative providers for its pupils.
- The school does not have any specific religious affiliation. Its aims to 'raise standards in the education of young people with autistic spectrum disorders to enable them to lead meaningful, fulfilling and happy lives'.
- The school holds an accreditation award from the National Autistic Society.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted at one day's notice and took place over two days.
- The inspector had discussions with a representative of the Priory Group, principal, head of education, deputy headteacher and a selection of staff.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work and talked to them about the school. He also looked at documents and data provided by the school to explain pupils' outcomes and progression beyond school.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers that the school had recorded and spoke with a carer. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to consider.
- The inspector took into account the 15 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and looked at a number of documents relating to referring local authorities.
- In order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards, the inspector examined policies, procedures and other records. These included the checks of the suitability of adults to work with children recorded on the school's single register, the attendance register and serious incident records.

## Inspection team

Andrew Johnson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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