

Education My Life Matters

Capital House, 45–47 Rushey Green, Catford, London SE26 6AD

Inspection dates

20–22 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders do not make regular checks on teaching quality or pupils' learning. As a result, they do not have a clear understanding of areas that need improvement.
- Teaching does not stretch or motivate all pupils sufficiently. This limits pupils' achievements, especially in English and mathematics.
- Assessment is not used consistently to check pupils' progress or to give them advice about how to improve their work.
- The impact of the school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not yet strong enough.
- Arrangements for governance require improvement. Leaders are not being held to account thoroughly enough for the school's performance.
- The school gives insufficient emphasis to raising pupils' achievement. This is because of staff's concentration on the need to react to pupils' challenging behaviour.
- The curriculum does not meet pupils' needs and interests fully. The work pupils are given does not consistently serve to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff at Education My Life Matters (EMLM) work unstintingly to enable pupils to stay in education.
- Some aspects of teaching motivate pupils well, enabling pupils to engage in their work and make progress.
- The school makes a significant difference by improving pupils' behaviour, which is often very challenging when they join the school.
- The work the school does has a positive impact on pupils' attendance. This has helped the local authority reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from school or persistently absent.
- Safeguarding is effective and leaders work closely with the local authority to ensure that concerns are followed up quickly.
- Leaders and trustees have ensured that the great majority of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - making sure that the work is matched more carefully to pupils' needs
 - developing a wider range of approaches to learning to motivate pupils more consistently.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's performance, including teaching and pupils' personal development, is evaluated more rigorously so that leaders can pinpoint areas for improvement and take appropriate action
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it is tied more closely to pupils' needs and levels of skill
 - developing the role of the board of trustees so that it can hold leaders to account more readily
 - ensuring that there is a strong climate for learning that supports teachers, staff and pupils in their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and those responsible for governance ensure that the school meets the requirements of the independent school standards to have up-to-date aims, policies and procedures. However, there are weaknesses in the way these are put into practice. As a result, pupils' achievements are not strong enough.
- The school's self-evaluation is not detailed enough. Leaders do not routinely analyse pupils' outcomes or the overall performance of the school thoroughly enough. For example, leaders have clear information about the number of pupils who move back into mainstream education or transfer to special provision. However, they have not analysed whether the outcomes are successful. While EMLM is successful in ensuring that pupils remain in education, there is no clarity about what needs improving and how to tackle any weaknesses.
- Teaching quality is not checked and evaluated on a regular basis. This means that there is too little information about the impact of teaching strategies on pupils' learning or whether teaching needs improving. Leaders do not have a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
- Leaders have not yet established clear procedures for staff appraisal. In part, this stems from not having enough information about the impact of teaching and mentoring on pupils' progress. One of the results of this is that opportunities for staff's professional development are limited. Leaders recognise that this is a weakness and have plans to provide training to develop staff skills.
- The curriculum is not yet good. Although the school has a well-planned programme that includes all areas of the curriculum, this does not reflect pupils' day-to-day experiences. In reality, the need to respond to pupils' challenging behaviour means that planned activities are changed. As a result, the breadth and depth of subject teaching becomes limited.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not strong enough. Much of the focus is on moral and social development through, for example, morning assemblies and one-to-one mentoring. This work is reasonably successful. Pupils know right from wrong and develop their ability to moderate their behaviour. However, cultural and spiritual development is much less clear, often because staff time is spent on managing pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders are committed to making a difference to the lives of vulnerable young people who are struggling to stay in education. Staff work tirelessly with pupils to help them overcome their emotional and behavioural challenges. For the most part this is successful. Pupils attend regularly and the school helps younger pupils to move back to mainstream schools and older ones to move on to further education.
- Leaders ensure that there is a range of policies on the school's website, including those for behaviour, safeguarding, complaints and health and safety. General information about pupils' achievements is recorded and passed to their mainstream school and/or the local authority virtual school.
- Leaders have a close working relationship with the local authority through the virtual

school. A particular strength of the school is that it is able to receive pupils excluded from mainstream schools very quickly. Other local authorities are looking to adopt similar flexible arrangements.

- The school promotes British values appropriately. Pupils know about respect and tolerance towards others, although they sometimes have difficulty putting this into practice. Pupils' knowledge of democracy and British institutions is somewhat limited by their poor school attendance in the past.
- One of the school's aims is to provide 'intensive work in numeracy and literacy' so that pupils 'are able to better access the curriculum on their return to mainstream education'. There is no formal assessment of pupils' progress and this makes it difficult for leaders to know if they are making a difference to achievements in literacy and numeracy. However, the school is successful in meeting its aim of returning pupils to mainstream education.

Governance

- Senior leaders and the independent board of trustees are committed to the school's purpose of working with vulnerable pupils. They bring a range of professional skills, including educational expertise. However, their work to provide a suitable level of challenge, especially in the quality of teaching and learning, requires improvement.
- At present, the arrangements for governance are limited. As a result, leaders are not being held to account thoroughly enough for the school's performance. While it is clear that senior leaders are committed to doing the best they can for pupils, they are not being asked searching enough questions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and those responsible for governance have ensured that there are appropriate policies for safeguarding and child protection. All staff have signed to confirm they have read and received Part 1 of 'Keeping pupils safe in education' (September 2016).
- Arrangements for recruiting and vetting staff are secure. The single central record is up to date and all the relevant checks are carried out thoroughly.
- The deputy headteacher, who acts as the designated safeguarding lead, works closely with the local authority to ensure that pupils' care and welfare are given priority. Record-keeping is clear and provides information about pupils' specific needs and action to keep them safe.
- Leaders work to keep pupils in education and prevent them from being drawn into crime or exploited by others. This is partly because there is regular training for staff, including in identifying the signs that pupils may be at risk of child sexual exploitation and in the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. Staff are quick to recognise pupils who are distressed or have concerns, and deal with them well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet strong enough. As a result, it does not have a consistently positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. The lack of a clear process to check the quality of teaching means that leaders do not have the information they need to make improvements.
- Staff tend to spend most of their time reacting to pupils' poor behaviour rather than focusing on learning. This often means that the day's programme becomes a series of informal activities rather than a planned experience. However, it is commendable that staff are able to deal flexibly with pupils' challenging behaviour and calm them down.
- A weakness in teaching is that the same work is given to everyone, regardless of their starting points or needs. As a result, some pupils get bored quickly and this leads to poor behaviour.
- Assessment is underdeveloped. Teachers make detailed notes of what pupils have done and pass these to the virtual school. However, they do not provide enough information about progress and attainment to inform the planning of their next steps in learning.
- Pupils at EMLM learn best where they are interested and engaged in practical activity. For example, learning was good in physical education (PE), with teaching pitched at the right level to keep pupils engaged. Moreover, teaching challenged pupils to develop their skills further.
- Leaders and staff work unselfishly with pupils to help them overcome their significant barriers to learning. For example, staff do not give up, even when pupils are being particularly rude or refuse to work. As a result, pupils' attitudes to school are a significant improvement on those in mainstream education. However, there is not a correspondingly strong emphasis on achievement, and pupils' learning is not yet good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. When pupils are referred to the school, it is usually because their needs have not been met in mainstream education. Many have been out of school for long periods.
- Despite the best efforts of staff to help pupils overcome these disadvantages, pupils' attitudes to school and each other are not consistently positive.
- Nevertheless, the school does make a difference, and pupils' attitudes improve during their time at EMLM. Most pupils become more self-confident, although they start from a very low base. The school's policy of no exclusion means that pupils are confident that staff care and want them to do well. They also say that their teachers and mentors have helped them control their anger.
- Pupils say that they know how to keep themselves safe, including from knife crime and internet grooming. They feel safe in school but say that there is some teasing which can occasionally become bullying. However, they are confident that staff will sort things out quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Many pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour. However, staff work hard to help pupils step up and take more control of themselves, and this has a broadly positive impact. As a result, all pupils improve their behaviour while at the school, albeit to different degrees. In some cases, pupils have enough 'positive' assessments to be able to move back into mainstream education. However, for others, the road back is more difficult and their behaviour, while improved, is still not good.
- Many pupils start at the school with very low levels of attendance. However, the school works successfully with them to improve their attendance. As a result, they nearly all attend regularly. Current figures show that the attendance of pupils has improved significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievements when they start school vary hugely depending on the reason for being referred to EMLM. Some have significant gaps in their learning and many have troubled experiences of education. Few pupils make good progress and most build up their knowledge and understanding slowly. One or two barely make any progress because their poor behaviour gets in the way.
- Pupils who stay on at EMLM until the end of Year 11 are able to take GCSE examinations. In 2017, for example, the small number of Year 11 pupils gained GCSE grades in English language, English literature, mathematics and science.
- All pupils move from the school to either mainstream education or to other special provision. Those that remain until the end of Year 11 move on to further education or training. Last year, for example, all pupils in Year 11 secured a place at the local further education college.

School details

Unique reference number	143933
DfE registration number	209/6003
Inspection number	10038182

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 school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ervin Hall
Chair	Charmaine Walters
Headteacher	Cynthia Eubanks
Annual fees (day pupils)	Not known
Telephone number	02086989663
Website	www.emlm.org.uk
Email address	info@emlm.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Education My Life Matters is an independent school that provides alternative provision. Its objective is to 'reconnect, re-engage and empower the learner who could possibly be at risk of becoming the subject of permanent exclusion'.
- The school is registered for up to 20 pupils; there are currently 10 on roll. Most are referred from local authority secondary schools in the London Borough of Lewisham.
- Education My Life Matter was registered by the Department for Education in December 2016 and this is its first standard inspection.
- The school is overseen by an independent board of trustees.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Some of these were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, including governors and pupils.
- Documentation and policies were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and assessment information.
- The inspector scrutinised records relating to the curriculum, the school's website and health and safety.
- The inspector reviewed records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.
- It was not possible to take account of the views of parents and carers because no parents replied to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- The proprietor must ensure that toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water, and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water (paragraphs 28(1) and 28(1)(b)).

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