

Ellern Mede School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	302/6118
Unique Reference Number	135072
Inspection number	330423
Inspection dates	4 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Ellern Mede School is an independent hospital school which forms part of the Ellern Mede Centre, an independent hospital providing specialist treatment for young people who have an eating disorder. It is located in the north London suburb of Totteridge. The school provides education solely for students who are being treated at the centre. All students attend school for as long as they are receiving treatment, usually for between six months and one year, although occasionally longer. Currently 16 students are on roll, aged between 10 and 18 years, almost all of whom are girls. They come from various parts of England and have their places funded by their local authorities. The school was last inspected in May 2006.

The school aims to provide 'a stimulating, positive educational experience that promotes good self-esteem and the achievement of realistically high standards of work and behaviour'. It also seeks to ensure that 'all the young people are recognised for what they can do and supported to overcome difficulties and distress'.

Evaluation of the school

Ellern Mede School provides a good quality of education and is successful in meeting its primary aims. An extremely caring ethos, supported by a close partnership with the centre, ensures that students feel safe and valued. Teaching is good and the sensitive approach of staff enables students to make good progress, particularly in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Some aspects of its work have improved, for example the provision for students' welfare health and safety, which is now outstanding. Improvements to the curriculum, which is satisfactory, have been less marked. Staff are aware of further work needed to extend the curriculum and they are developing appropriate plans. The school meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is supported by a clear policy and it provides all the required areas of learning. The main subjects taught are English,

mathematics, science, art, film studies and citizenship. Additional activities include light craft projects and production of the school's magazine 'Medea Bites'. Physical exercise is provided through weekly games sessions in the centre or school grounds. This arrangement is satisfactory, although a few students feel they would like more opportunities for taking exercise. Some subjects are not provided, for example history, geography, music and a modern foreign language. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not taught as a separate subject or included systematically in the planning of other subjects. Students usually attend for a short period of time and the individual 'study time' sessions built into the timetable allow them to catch up on work from their home school. Personal, social and health education is largely provided in the centre, where each student has an individual programme delivered by a key worker. Trips and visits to support the curriculum have been organised, for example to the London Eye. However these do not take place often and the school has plans to include more.

Curriculum planning is satisfactory and the school is currently updating it. Classes include students from more than one year group and planning is not complete in some subjects to show how the needs of students of different age and aptitude are met in the longer term. The curriculum for post-16 students is limited. It relies heavily on a student's home school supplying work which makes it difficult for students to continue studying effectively some of their subjects, for example modern languages. Careers advice is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced 'life skills' sessions which help prepare students for future employment by developing their interview skills.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers have a good understanding of students' needs and use praise and encouragement effectively to boost their self-confidence. Students enjoy working in the small groups and they settle to work quickly. They are often encouraged to make choices and to follow up topics related to their particular interest. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers set high expectations for learning. Homework is set regularly. Teachers have good subject knowledge to teach their specialist subjects to A level, although the existing staff group have insufficient subject knowledge to deliver additional A level courses some students wish to study. The range of resources to support teaching and learning is satisfactory. ICT is used in some lessons when students research topics on the internet, although its use is underdeveloped to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. The school has plans to extend the use of ICT. There are limited facilities for teaching practical subjects. The accommodation is maintained to a high standard and provides an attractive environment for learning.

Students' progress is assessed at the end of each term and the results are shared with parents. Teachers know the level at which students are working and use the information to plan lessons. Targets for each student's broader social development are also set and monitored. However, it is difficult to measure a student's progress since joining the school because of the lack of a unified system to track social and academic progress. A few parents feel they would like clearer information about their children's progress. Available information indicates that students make good

progress, particularly in developing their self-confidence. Students gain the expected GCSE examination passes in the subjects provided by the school and by completing other courses through links with their home schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' personal development is good. They enjoy coming to school, as shown by the very high rate of attendance. In the words of one, 'I'm so glad I came here.' The relaxed, friendly atmosphere enables students to feel accepted and to steadily develop greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Students get along well with each other and their behaviour is good. Staff encourage students to exercise control in ways other than through eating, for example, by giving opportunities for students to follow up particular interests. The work of the school in helping students develop their social skills and self-confidence is strengthened by the provision of regular group sessions in the centre. Students are able to express their views through making contributions to the termly school magazine. They have also taken responsibility for collecting supermarket vouchers to purchase games equipment and have refurbished the school's garden furniture. Opportunities for students to contribute to the wider community are limited. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is good. They reach high academic standards in numeracy and literacy and complete a work experience placement where appropriate. The citizenship curriculum includes consideration of human rights and responsibilities and the role of public institutions and services. Students have a satisfactory understanding of different cultures and religions in modern Britain which is promoted through for example, topics in art and citizenship and the celebration of key festivals. However, this is not set out in a programme to ensure comprehensive coverage of this area.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Each student has an individual plan based on an assessment of their specific eating disorder and emotional needs. The centre manages all aspects of a student's medical needs which are central to promoting a healthy lifestyle. Each student has regular therapy and receives close support from a key worker. The school and centre work together closely and share relevant medical information on students' development, for example, when assessing if a student is ready to leave. There are high levels of staffing and adults relate to students in a relaxed and friendly manner. As a result students feel safe and are comfortable discussing any worries or concerns. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust. A clear child protection policy is in place and staff have received relevant training. Thorough checks are completed prior to the appointment of new staff to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Detailed health and safety policies and risk assessments are in place which cover all aspects of the school's work. Some relate to students' specific eating disorders and are shared with the centre; for example, managing physical illness and use of the toilet. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked by a specialist company.

The school has a removable ramp for access to the building and has a plan for increasing access for disabled users which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve provision for A level teaching
- carry through plans to develop the curriculum and to increase the use of ICT
- improve the tracking of students' progress over their time in school.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

School details

Name of school	Ellern Mede School		
DCSF number	302/6118		
Unique reference number	135072		
Type of school	Hospital school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	July 2001		
Age range of pupils	11 – 18 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 15	Total: 16
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,580		
Address of school	Ellern Mede School 31 Totteridge Common London N20 8LR		
Telephone number	0208 959 7774		
Fax number	0208 959 6311		
Email address	sarah.dixon@ellernmede.org		
Headteacher	Ms Sarah Dixon		
Proprietor	Ellern Mede School Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection	4 March 2009		