

Inspection of Education My Life Matters

5 Rosenthal Road, Lewisham, London SE6 2BX

Inspection dates: 25–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff help pupils to get back into mainstream education. They make sure that pupils feel safe and settled during their time here. However, the quality of education that pupils receive is not good enough. Pupils who stay at the school for a long time do not build up knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Leaders and staff do not have high enough expectations of pupils. Too often, they set limits on what pupils can do.

Many pupils are vulnerable and have high needs. Pupils often arrive with very negative attitudes towards education. Leaders and staff spend time getting to know each pupil. They are patient and approachable. Pupils feel valued here. They told us that staff listen and care about them. Pupils also look out for each other. They work with staff to make sure any bullying gets sorted out.

Staff know how to deal with pupils who have challenging behaviour. Pupils try to behave well in lessons, but this varies. Staff use different strategies to promote positive behaviour. For example, pupils compete to earn points to win a voucher or have 'golden time'. They also go on reward trips, such as ice-skating and bowling.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders have struggled to make lasting improvements to the school. Governors, including the proprietor, do not have clear plans to improve the school. Their oversight of the school is weak.

Staff help pupils to improve their behaviour. Pupils learn strategies to deal with difficult situations. They told me about the 'different zones of behaviour', and how they learn to control their anger. Staff keep in close contact with parents and carers. Leaders also work with agencies such as social care and the youth offending team. They have a joined-up approach to ensure that pupils get the help they need.

The school has different numbers of pupils most weeks. Pupils might attend for some days while they take time out from their base school. Other pupils may be here for weeks and/or months. Staff support pupils to complete work that their teachers have set. Most pupils have a successful return to their school or move to a new school.

All pupils study English and mathematics. Staff follow a programme to help pupils gain basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. This leads to a qualification, which some pupils have achieved in the past. Teachers explain concepts well. However, tasks are often repetitive and dull. Pupils can lose interest quickly and give up.

Pupils learn a range of subjects. Leaders do not give much thought to what pupils learn, other than in English and mathematics. Their work is often a series of random

tasks. Teachers do not always use lesson time well. Pupils have limited experience in subjects such as science and physical education.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their computing skills. They do research work for projects on subjects that interest them, for example the history of women's football or important people from Black history. Pupils also have access to recording equipment and like creating their own music.

Pupils who are here on a long-term placement do not have a clear programme of study. Leaders create a daily timetable, but pupils do the same thing most days. Work is not tailored for each pupil. As a result, pupils do not always have tasks that are suitable for their age and ability. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

For many pupils, their school attendance has been poor or non-existent. Staff gradually re-engage pupils and their attendance improves. Punctuality is an ongoing issue for some pupils.

Many pupils have low self-esteem. Staff try to build their confidence through activities such as art therapy. They explore any personal issues through one-to-one sessions. Pupils learn to work together. They have team games and group discussions on topical and moral issues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders and staff take their responsibilities seriously. They understand pupils' challenging circumstances and the risks many of them face outside of the school. Staff search pupils each morning and take in mobile phones. Pupils comply because they know that staff have their best interests at heart.

Staff have regular safeguarding training and updates. They are vigilant about any changes in pupils' behaviour and follow up any concerns swiftly. Pupils learn about staying safe and how to look after their mental health. Visitors to the school teach pupils about specific risks, such as gangs and county lines.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor and governors do not hold school leaders sufficiently to account. Governors lack urgency in developing the school further. They are unclear about the school's effectiveness and what needs to improve. There are unmet independent school standards. Governors should take immediate action to improve their skills and knowledge so that they can carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively.

- The curriculum is not well thought out. Apart from English and mathematics, pupils learn subjects on an ad-hoc basis and planning is not carefully sequenced to build up pupils' knowledge. Pupils have limited experience of some subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is well structured and consistently broad. Staff need training to help them deliver high-quality lessons in a range of subjects.
- Leaders do not have clear plans in place to ensure that pupils on long-term placements receive a good quality of education. They are not ambitious enough for these pupils. All pupils generally do the same tasks and activities. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those on a long-term placement.
- The school caters for the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff support the wide-ranging needs of pupils effectively. However, staff do not always have the knowledge and training to tailor the provision for pupils with specific and complex needs. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive high-quality training in this respect.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	143933
DfE registration number	209/6003
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10115226
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	6
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Ervin Hall
Chair	Charmaine Waters
Headteacher	Sheila Taylor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,500
Telephone number	020 8698 9663
Website	http://www.emlm.org.uk/
Email address	info@emlm.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–22 March 2018

Information about this school

- Education My Life Matters is an independent school in the London borough of Lewisham.
- The school provides full-time alternative provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or other providers. Pupils typically attend on a temporary basis. The school also offers a respite service to schools, providing short-term places for pupils with behavioural needs.
- The school has registration for up to 20 pupils aged 11 to 16.
- The current headteacher took up her post in September 2019. She acts as an advisory headteacher and works part-time at the school. The Department for

Education's online database 'Getting Information About Schools' does not reflect the name of the current headteacher.

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The previous standard inspection took place in March 2018. Progress monitoring inspections took place on 28 November 2018, 25 April 2019 and 30 October 2019.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We held meetings with leaders, including the advisory headteacher and the strategic lead for the school. I met with the proprietor and held telephone discussions with two governors, including the chair of governors.
- We looked at English, mathematics, information and communication technology and personal, social, health and economic education in detail. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers, support staff and pupils. All other subjects were also considered.
- We spoke with pupils during visits to lessons and at break and lunchtime.
- We held telephone discussions with staff from schools who have previously placed pupils at Education My Life Matters. I also spoke with a representative from the Lewisham special educational needs team.
- There were no responses to the online surveys for parents, pupils and staff.
- We looked at a range of documentation provided by school leaders and information on the school website. This included records related to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Jude Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Davies

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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