

Inspection of Education-My Life Matters

5 Rosenthal Road, Catford, London SE6 2BX

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 July 2022

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?

This school makes a difference to pupils' lives. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils and aim to provide a nurturing and academic environment for them to achieve their best. However, leaders do not deliver this aim fully because there are weaknesses in the quality of education. Pupils' experience varies greatly across different subjects.

Adults build strong professional relationships with pupils and help them to manage their behaviour. Although learning is sometimes disrupted by pupils' behaviour, adults take effective action and calm any difficult situations swiftly. This keeps pupils safe and makes them feel secure. Adults sort out any incidents of bullying that occur.

Staff take the time to find out about pupils' interests and work hard to ensure that they can pursue these through different activities. For example, pupils visited a chocolatier and to see how chocolates are made. Leaders organise a summer programme of activities. Leaders help pupils to find out about and apply for college courses.

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

Leaders rightly prioritise pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. They have developed an ambitious curriculum in these subjects that sets out clearly what important knowledge will be taught. Staff use assessment to check pupils' prior knowledge and ensure that any misconceptions are addressed. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to revisit what they have learned. This helps them to remember more over time and use what they know when they tackle new ideas. For example, pupils have dedicated time to read regularly, which helps them to read with confidence.

However, other subjects are not as well thought through and resources for pupils are sometimes limited. In science, pupils do not take part in practical activities. Pupils use laptops but wider experience of technology is restricted. During physical education (PE), pupils visit local parks regularly. Pupils can use the outdoor gym and play games but the range of physical activities and sports available is limited. As a result, pupils do not develop secure physical and sporting knowledge and skills. Leaders have not reintroduced some of the wider PE opportunities that were in place before the COVID-19 pandemic. In subject plans, leaders have not identified in detail the important knowledge pupils need to know securely. This means that what pupils learn is not well sequenced to help pupils build up key skills and knowledge securely across all subjects. These inconsistencies in the quality of education mean that pupils do not learn equally effectively across the curriculum.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well planned. Leaders make sure that staff are trained and know what strategies to use to help pupils learn. As a result, teachers adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet pupils' social and emotional needs effectively. Pupils who attend the school for

a short time study a selected range of subjects. They get effective support, which helps to build their confidence to return to mainstream education.

Pupils usually behave well and adults are skilled in helping them to manage their behaviour. Nevertheless, pupils said that their learning is sometimes interrupted by pupils' behaviour. The school's approach to 'meeting and greeting' pupils at the start of the day and well-being activities lack structure and clear purpose. Pupils do not benefit from these activities as much as they should. As a result, pupils typically lack motivation and are slow to settle. Variability in pupils' experience across subjects and how they are delivered means that pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive.

Provision for pupils' personal development is uneven. Staff work exceptionally well with individual pupils. They identify and nurture pupils' interests and talents and organise activities and visits that build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, some personal-development activities are not routinely well thought through. Sometimes, leaders do not communicate with each other and are unaware of what pupils learn and when. Leaders have not ensured that pupils receive appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) because RSE planning lacks leadership. Leaders have not consulted with parents and carers about the content of the RSE curriculum. The current RSE policy does not meet requirements.

Careers guidance is effective. Adults work well with individual pupils to identify their interests and aspirations and plan suitable pathways for their next steps. Pupils learn about the choices available to them and are encouraged to reflect on their own skills. Leaders of provision for pupils with SEND make sure that careers pathways are a focus during the annual review process. They make sure that pupils can follow up on careers advice received from their previous school.

The headteacher has quickly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have developed an improvement action plan and are using it to guide their work. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified. This already includes clearer expectations for staff and pupils than in the past and a framework for assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. There is a new curriculum policy, and much-needed work on aspects of the curriculum is underway. These changes are starting to have a positive impact and show leaders' capacity to improve the school. The new chair of the governing body has used her experience to begin to challenge leaders and hold them to account. Plans are in place to extend governors' training.

The proprietor has developed strong networks with external agencies to provide the right support for pupils. However, the proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met or that the quality of pupils' education has improved securely in all aspects since the previous inspection. Until recently, the pace of improvement has been slow. The appointment of key leaders is already having a clear impact on driving improvements. Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils face because they have been well trained. Leaders have effective systems for recording and reporting concerns. Leaders work effectively with a range of local services and external agencies to ensure that pupils get the help they need. All the required pre-employment checks on staff are completed and recorded.

Pupils feel safe in school and know they can rely on adults to help them if they have any concerns. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. The school has a suitable safeguarding policy, which is published for parents on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Not all aspects of the curriculum are planned, resourced and delivered consistently well. This means that pupils do not get the breadth and depth of learning that they should to be as well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training as they should be. Leaders should ensure that pupils learn a broad curriculum that includes depth in PE and technology.
- The purpose of learning activities is not routinely clear in all subjects. This means that in some subjects, pupils are not helped as well as in other subjects to learn and remember important ideas. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects identifies what pupils must learn and remember. Leaders must also ensure that the order in which key content is learned supports pupils to build up and remember what they need to know in order to succeed.
- Sometimes, personal-development activities, including 'meet-and-greet' activities and well-being days, are not well planned. Leaders do not communicate effectively with each other and sometimes time is wasted. This has a negative impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Leaders should ensure that they know what each other are planning, time is used well and that staff have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour in these activities as in other subjects
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils receive RSE. Leaders have not consulted parents about the school's RSE policy or the content of the RSE curriculum. Leaders should ensure that they develop and fully implement a curriculum in RSE that aligns with the national statutory guidance.

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School details

Unique reference number	143933
DfE registration number	209/6003
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10242786
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	11
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	Ervin Hall
Chair	Eyvonne Browne
Headteacher	Sonia Mukerji
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,500
Telephone number	020 8698 9663
Website	www.emlm.org.uk
Email address	info@emlm.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 February 2020

Information about this school

- Education-My Life Matters is an independent school and an alternative provision. It caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years old. There is a high proportion of pupils with SEND.
- Some pupils attend full-time. Others are dual rolled with their mainstream school for short-term placements or for fixed-term exclusions. Most pupils have experienced disrupted schooling before arriving at the school.
- Pupils enrolled at the school and those on long-term placements follow the school's curriculum. Pupils on short-term placements and those who have been excluded from school do work set by the mainstream school or are taught in partnership with the Lewisham Virtual School.
- Since the last inspection, the school has had five different headteachers. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body had been recently appointed.
- The school's previous inspection was in February 2020. The school was judged to require improvement.
- A progress monitoring inspection took place in February 2022. This was to check the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. Some of the independent school standards were not met at the progress monitoring inspection.
- The school uses the Young Lewisham Project, SE23 2SR, as alternative provision.
- Pupils use the facilities at Ladywell Fields, SE6 4YA for outdoor recreation and activities.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and other members of staff.

- The lead inspector met with the proprietor and one of the directors, held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body and looked at documentary evidence of their work.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics; personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education; and geography. The lead inspector met with subject leaders, visited classes, looked at subject plans and pupils' work and met with pupils and staff.
- The lead inspector visited an online science activity, 'a meet and greet' session and activities as part of well-being day. The lead inspector talked to pupils about their work and their views of the school.
- The lead inspector met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks. The lead inspector talked with staff about the impact of their safeguarding training and to pupils about how safe they feel in school.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations and/or met with representatives of the local authority.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor–
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools,
 - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b)
 - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
 - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.
- 2A(2) Arrangements made by the proprietor for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1)(b) must ensure that where a pupil's parent requests that the pupil is wholly or partly excused from sex education provided as part of relationships and sex education, the pupil is so excused until the request is withdrawn, unless or to the extent that the head teacher considers that the pupil should not be so excused.
- 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(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range.

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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