

# Ellern Mede School

Holcombe Hill, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 4HX

**Inspection dates** 8–10 October 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | <b>Outstanding</b> | <b>1</b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Leadership and management      | Outstanding        | 1        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Outstanding        | 1        |
| Quality of teaching            | Outstanding        | 1        |
| Achievement of pupils          | Outstanding        | 1        |
| Sixth form provision           | Outstanding        | 1        |

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding school

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has secured significant improvements since the last inspection. Partnerships with home schools, hospital staff and placing authorities have been strengthened. As a result, all groups of students achieve outstandingly well.
- Students achieve high grades in their GCSE, AS and A2 level examinations. This is as a result of a broad and highly personalised curriculum that prepares them well for their future.
- Teaching is outstanding and enables students to make rapid progress, including those who have special educational needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled and passionate about releasing the potential of each student. They establish very positive working relationships based on mutual respect and very high expectations.
- Exemplary pastoral care and robust safeguarding arrangements promote very high levels of well-being in students. They feel safe and secure, and enjoy school. Their behaviour is outstanding. Students show excellent attitudes to learning once they are ready to engage in education, and the attendance of most is very high.
- The sixth form is outstanding. As a result of outstanding teaching and personalised support, students' achievement is excellent.
- The governing body is very actively committed to improving the school. The trustees have ensured that all regulations for independent schools are met. Financial resources are used wisely to benefit all students and help them to achieve exceptionally well. Governors are directly involved with the school and know it very well.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted at one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 13 part lessons taught by seven teachers. She observed three meetings, one of which included several hospital staff, where the medical, emotional and academic needs of students were reviewed and discussed. Students were heard reading.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the consultant clinical director of the hospital, teachers, teaching assistants and students.
- Questionnaire responses were considered from eight members of staff. No information was available from the online questionnaire Parent View. However, the inspector spoke to two parents to seek their views of the school. The views of a placing authority were obtained through a telephone conversation.
- A wide range of documents were examined, including school policies and procedures, and information on students' performance. Individual student files, samples of work, and reports on their welfare and academic progress were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Michèle Messaoudi, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ellern Mede School is an independent day special school. It works in partnership with the Ellern Mede Centre, an independent hospital providing intensive specialist treatment for young people who have an eating disorder. It is located in the London Borough of Barnet. The school was registered in May 2005 to provide education for up to 17 students aged between 11 and 18 years who are being treated at the centre. All students attend school for as long as they are receiving treatment, usually between six to 12 months, although occasionally longer. In addition to medical needs and mental health issues, students may have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and/or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The school does not make use of any off-site training. While they attend Ellern Mede, students remain on the roll of their home schools and many reintegrate into their previous school once they are discharged from hospital.
- Currently, 21 students are on roll, aged between 11 and 18 years, almost all of whom are girls. Most come from various parts of England and have their places funded by their local authorities. Some have had long periods of interruption to their education. Two students have a statement of special educational needs. Also, two students have recently joined the school from overseas and have bilingual competency in English. Most students are White British and some are from minority ethnic groups that include Irish, Dutch, Caribbean, Egyptian, Iraqi and Iranian cultural backgrounds.
- The school was last inspected in March 2009, when it was judged to be good. It has charitable status and it is managed by a governing body consisting of three trustees and four governors. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2011. 'Key teachers' monitor the curriculum and individual educational plans of the students assigned to them in partnership with parents, home schools, hospital staff and placing authorities. They oversee students' reintegration back into the home schools and transition to the next stage of learning or employment. In each subject, the same teacher teaches all year groups including the sixth form.
- 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'
  - ensure 'all the young people are recognised for what they can do and supported to overcome difficulties and distress'.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership further by:
  - implementing plans to improve the already effective governance of the school so that the school's performance is scrutinised even more systematically
  - consolidating links with local schools and the wider community to extend students' experience of diversity, democracy, and careers education.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school with great energy and decisiveness, clear vision and the benefit of considerable experience. Since the last inspection, the curriculum, and the quality of teaching and management of the school, have improved significantly. As a result, students' achievement is now outstanding, across many subjects, including English and mathematics. The sixth form is outstanding. All the regulations for independent schools are met.
- Leadership is highly effectively in sharing the wide range of skills, knowledge and experience that exist within the body of staff. The school's review of its performance is accurate. Further improvements are secured through a well-considered school development plan.
- The leadership of teaching is very strong and has resulted in eliminating a small proportion of teaching that required improvement. The process for setting targets for teachers is clearly linked to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Teachers say that they are satisfied with the training and development they receive. Plans for checking students' learning without levels are already well advanced.
- The curriculum, previously judged to require improvement, is now broad, balanced, highly personalised, monitored closely and adjusted appropriately by the key teachers. It benefits from specialist teaching and highly skilled teaching assistants. Several subjects and GCSE courses have been introduced, including history, geography, French, German, Spanish, drama, music, design and technology/textiles, sociology, and health and social care. Students are also able to take BTEC courses and the range of work-related courses is expanding.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well across the curriculum, and reading has a high profile in the school. The curriculum is very effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in preparing them actively for life in modern Britain.
- Very effective partnerships with home schools, hospital staff, placing authorities and parents underpin the personalised curriculum and pastoral care. Links are forged with local schools and the wider community for the purpose of furthering teachers' training and development, and widening the range of practical experiences students have of diversity, democracy and careers education. However, the ways in which such links are fostered are underdeveloped.
- The school makes excellent provision for students who have special educational needs. This area of the school's work is very well coordinated by an experienced leader who works diligently with placing authorities and home schools to secure statements of special educational needs for students.
- Key teachers lead the monitoring of students' academic progress, attendance and behaviour very effectively, in close partnerships with all the teachers and the hospital staff. They ensure that students have access to up-to-date and impartial careers advice.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

The governors are highly skilled, experienced and committed to improving the school. They are fully informed of all aspects of the school's performance through regular meetings and visits, reports on students' academic progress and well-being, and various checking activities. They have a good understanding of performance data. They contribute to the process of self-review, including setting targets for teachers, linked to students' progress.

Link governors gain a direct insight into the quality of education and pastoral care through observations of teaching in core subjects at least once a year. The teachers feel well supported by governors, resulting, for example, in improved teaching resources and enrichment activities.

The trustees ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective.

Financial resources are managed wisely to reward high-quality teaching and secure the best outcomes for students. There are plans in hand to further develop the school premises and provide more spacious accommodation for practical subjects.

The governing body recognises that, while it is effective in holding the school to account for all aspects of its performance, not all aspects are examined systematically. It is looking into working through a more efficient structure.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

#### Behaviour

- Students' behaviour in and out of classrooms is outstanding. Students are keen to learn, and take pride in their work, as evidenced by their books and portfolios. They are well focused on their work even if they do not always participate orally in lessons. They praise their teachers for being very caring and

supportive. They show respect for others' learning and low-level disruption is rare.

- All staff are thoroughly informed of students' emotional, medical and academic needs on a daily basis and use this information to provide a very high quality of pastoral care.

### Safety

- Very close partnerships with the multidisciplinary hospital teams, and robust procedures, ensure that the school's work to keep students safe and promote their well-being is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements ensure that staff are properly vetted and trained, and that any risk posed to students is thoroughly assessed.
- Students look to their key teacher as an anchor that provides stability in challenging circumstances. They feel safe and secure, where all staff treat them with respect, understand their anxieties and set very high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Students are fully aware of all forms of bullying and report that bullying is very rare, which is confirmed by school records. They learn how to keep safe in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and mostly through programmes taught by hospital staff.
- The attendance of most students is very high. Those who need intensive medical treatment cannot attend school until deemed fit to do so by the hospital staff. School records show that these students re-engage relatively quickly in their education owing to very effective teaching strategies, after which their attendance becomes regular.
- Students actively learn to respect and apply British democratic values. This is done through well-structured debates, in which opposing views are presented in a balanced way, for example on animal testing and capital punishment. Students also reflect on their academic and personal progress at community meetings run by hospital staff. They share their views on how to improve their school life with teachers and feel that they are listened to.
- Students learn to appreciate diversity and gain an awareness of issues associated with discrimination and extremism through the curriculum, PSHCE, exchanges with peers who have different heritages from theirs, and hospital programmes.
- Students are helped to adjust back to their home school through a well-coordinated reintegration programme in partnership with hospital staff and home school leaders.

### The quality of teaching

**is outstanding**

- Teaching is typically outstanding, and never less than good, throughout the school and across all subjects. As a result, students make excellent progress and achieve outstandingly well, including students who have special educational needs.
- Teachers are experienced subject specialists who impart secure knowledge to their students. Teachers and teaching assistants share the same passion and understanding of what high-quality learning looks like. They have consistently high expectations of what each student can achieve and work very effectively together to help all students fulfil their potential. They are very attentive to students' responses and act immediately to support, consolidate or extend their learning. As a result, students make sustained progress.
- On entry, the school takes into consideration a wide range of information, including checks on students' progress from their home school, and assessments of their medical and special educational needs. Key teachers use this information to form a holistic profile of the student and share it with all teachers. This profile is then used effectively to design a personalised curriculum and measure academic progress. Students' progress over time is tracked rigorously.
- Teachers demonstrate a thorough understanding of each student's needs and use the most effective strategies to re-engage them in learning. They manage students with sensitivity and perseverance. They show great flexibility in adapting activities to respond to students' changing moods and needs. Transition timetables are agreed in close partnership with the clinical consultant director to make informed decisions about each student's capacity to cope with school work, on arrival and following relapses.
- All teachers are excellent role models who promote the highest standards of behaviour and courtesy, and establish very positive working relationships. They give students verbal and written feedback that is consistently encouraging and shows them exactly how to improve their work. Teachers ask challenging questions that deepen students' understanding of the subject. They promote students' social skills and self-confidence by engaging them in group discussion.

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- Students' achievement is outstanding owing to the excellent teaching, personalised curriculum and exemplary pastoral care. Students join the school with starting points that range from below to above age-expectations. They also have complex medical needs that restrict their physical movement and have a significant impact on their attendance and learning. They make rapid progress throughout the school in many subjects, including English and mathematics. There are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of students.
- Rigorous initial and ongoing checks enable teachers to identify gaps in reading and numeracy skills early and to help students catch up rapidly.
- Students achieve high standards in reading, or make rapid progress in their reading skills, through daily opportunities for reading a wide range of texts. For example, the 'book to film' programme encourages them to read demanding novels and compare with the film versions. This deepens their understanding of how characters and themes can be interpreted, and develops their critical and speaking skills. This programme, among others, is particularly effective in developing bilingual students' literacy skills.
- In most subjects, students have regular opportunities to apply their literacy, mathematical and communication skills, for example in science and drama.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs or specific learning difficulties make rapid progress because activities are set at the correct level and they are extremely well supported. These students have access to the full curriculum, which reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all students.
- Students are exceptionally well supported by teachers in overcoming their barriers to learning owing to a well-judged mix of sensitive handling of their emotions and very high expectations of work. Key teachers negotiate weekly targets with students to ensure that all areas of their curriculum are covered in sufficient depth, in order to secure the best possible outcomes.
- The few students who completed their Key Stage 4 education at the school gained good-quality grades in their GCSEs.
- Those students who joined with high starting points achieved a high proportion of the top grades, in as many as 10 subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Those who joined with lower starting points than expected for their age, or who have experienced long periods of ill health, achieved well and made outstanding progress.
- Students receive up-to-date and impartial careers advice through very effective partnerships with home schools, parents and outside agencies. Feedback received by the school shows that some students who have left the school have progressed confidently to university education or employment.

**The sixth form provision****is outstanding**

- The sixth form is outstanding. Teachers are highly skilled subject specialists who can teach in great depth and so enable students to achieve outstandingly well. Students are highly motivated and challenged consistently, and so they make exceptional progress, including those who have special educational needs. Teaching is outstanding and has improved since the last inspection.
- Students follow a personalised curriculum designed in partnership with home schools and hospital staff. They are able to choose between 14 subjects examined at AS and A2 levels and additional non-examined subjects that include physical education and enrichment activities.
- The very few students who have completed their AS or A2 course at the school have achieved A to D grades in their chosen subjects, the vast majority being A to C grades. Those who took GCSEs achieved A to C grades. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of students.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent, once they are ready to engage with education.
- Students' understanding of potential risks to their health, safety and well-being is developed very effectively by the PSHCE programme taught by hospital staff.
- The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. It is highly effective in securing the best outcomes for students and in preparing them well for their future. Students receive good careers advice and are clear about their career paths.

## What inspection judgements mean

| School  |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| Grade   | Judgement            |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding          |
| Grade 2 | Good                 |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate           |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 135072   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 443481   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b> | 302/6118 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Day special school           |
| <b>School status</b>                          | Independent school           |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–18                        |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                        |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                        |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 21                           |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 7                            |
| <b>Number of part time pupils</b>             | 0                            |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                             | Ellern Mede School Ltd       |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Richard Lansdown             |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Adel El-Shirbini             |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 4 March 2009                 |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>               | £29,450                      |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 020 8959 7774                |
| <b>Fax number</b>                             | 0844 725 202                 |
| <b>Email address</b>                          | adel.shirbini@ellernmede.org |



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