



Forest House Education Centre

Introduction

Forest House Education Centre (FHEC) is a hospital school situated on the Kingsley Green (formerly Harperbury) site and attached to Forest House Adolescent Unit (FHAU), a 16-bed Tier 4 psychiatric inpatient unit for young people up to the age of 18. In addition to the students who come to the Centre from FHAU, we also provide education for a small number of 'day pupils' whose clinical needs are being met within the community, and are mostly referred to us for KS4 by ESTMA (the Hertfordshire medical needs home tuition service).

Our Young People

Our students present with a variety of needs. Many have had negative experiences of mainstream school; some are suffering from depressive conditions. Three of the Unit beds are allocated for children with eating disorders; other frequent presentations include OCD, PTSD and psychotic disorders. Our day pupils often have a slightly different profile; here, histories of school refusal, social isolation and stress- and anxiety-related conditions are more common.

Unit students normally join us shortly after admission, once they have been risk-assessed and deemed clinically fit to attend school. Admission lengths vary; shorter admissions can be a matter of weeks, whereas some presentations require a hospital stay of many months' duration. Close liaison with mainstream schools assists with reintegration, which usually begins when a student is approaching discharge and is considered clinically robust enough to thrive in the mainstream environment. Our day pupils, in contrast, frequently attend the Centre for the entirety of Year 10 and/or Year 11, in which case the Centre becomes their sole educator.

The Centre's Philosophy

The Centre's philosophy is twofold; that it should support the therapeutic work being undertaken by its students, while maintaining the beneficial aspects of mainstream school (a conventionally-structured timetable, high academic expectations, a varied curriculum). Many of our students would, in other circumstances, have been high achievers (indeed, the pressures and stresses associated with high achievement are sometimes related to their medical conditions), and it is our hope that their time in hospital should not be bereft of mental stimulation.

Students are encouraged to self-manage their psychological, emotional and behavioural issues while in the Centre. Taking time out during lessons and discussing issues with Centre staff (or, if required, our colleagues in FHAU or C-CATT, the CAMHS Crisis team) form part of the process of managing many conditions. 'Conventional' school behavioural issues (bullying and so on) are generally a very minor part of Centre life; this is partly due to the vigilance of staff, a heightened sensitivity to safeguarding issues and a 'handover' culture of information sharing which we have in common with our Unit colleagues.

Curriculum

The Centre operates a curriculum with two distinct strands. The first is our 'core' curriculum of English, maths and science, principally intended to bridge the gap in a student's basic education while they are unable to attend their mainstream school. The second strand is our 'enrichment' curriculum (comprising music, drama, art, humanities, current affairs, work-related learning, computing, independent personalised learning and an end-of-week review session), wherein conventional academic expectations are matched by an emphasis on collaboration, creativity and self-expression.

Twice a year (in the run-up to Christmas and at the end of the summer term), conventional teaching is suspended and all students attending the Centre join together to write, produce and perform a half-hour piece of theatre, and take part in an enterprise-based project. Many of our students report that these are amongst their most positive experiences of attending the Centre.

Site And Facilities

The Centre is principally housed in the ground floor of 9 Forest Lane ('Forest House Annexe'), a building owned by the Trust. Our accommodation comprises two main teaching classrooms (one doubling as a music room), a dedicated art room, a central social/assembly space, a small sixth form independent study area and library, a day students' room and kitchen, and a further classroom principally used for one-to-one tuition and hosting examinations. Upstairs, we are fortunate to have a studio space equipped with theatre lighting and a portable raked seating bank.

Organisation Of Teaching

The curriculum is mostly delivered in two distinct groups, the Ducks and the Rabbits. The Ducks are the smaller group, mostly working the music room, an environment conducive to delivering the nurturing, highly supportive (and often highly individualised) teaching that meets the needs of our most vulnerable students. Often, but not always, KS3 Unit admissions will be allocated a place in the Ducks group, as will many former ESTMA students who are integrating into our day pupils' scheme by means of a staggered transition.

The Rabbits are the larger group, accommodated in the main classroom and comprising students whose needs are best served by a more conventional classroom mode of teaching.

In addition, the Centre supports post-16 students in their studies by providing space, facilities, tutorial support (subject to sufficient expertise being held by the Centre's staff), exam transfers and liaison with the student's home school. NEETs and post-16 students without good passes in GCSE English and maths are also supported through the opportunity to join either the Ducks or Rabbits group, or to improve their study skills through individual project work, progress towards literacy and numeracy qualifications, supported work on college applications or the development of life skills within the Centre. All students (Ducks, Rabbits, post-16) come together for the enrichment curriculum (citizenship, art, and so on).

The Centre seeks to reward the work of its students through the accreditation pathway most appropriate to the student's individual needs. Last academic year, we successfully entered students for (I)GCSEs in English language and literature, Living Texts, maths, triple-award sciences, geography, general studies, art and humanities, in addition to a number of entry-level qualifications and A levels. To this end, we benefit enormously from being a registered examination centre.