

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW

Approval Recommendation: Grant renewal of general education independent school approval for five years, through June 30, 2022. Approval would be subject to the school complying with the assurances as outlined in the General Education Approval Application during the approval period.

School Description: East Meadow School (EMS) is a day treatment program with educational components and serves male and female students in grades K-12. EMS is one of four schools administered by Northeastern Family Institute (NFI) of Vermont. The school's educational philosophy is to address students' individual emotional, behavioral, social, and academic needs by creating a positive community that focuses on mutual respect. Staff and students work collaboratively to develop safe and trusting relationships. Students are given opportunities for responsible decision-making as a means of fostering competence and independence.

Review Findings: The school occupies half of a single story, recently constructed building in Morrisville, VT. The school comprises three classrooms, two sensory rooms, two self-care rooms, a kitchen and a computer lab, which will be repurposed next year when the school will purchase chrome books for students. In addition, there are three administrative offices, a conference room, and a waiting room. Outdoor facilities include four-square, basketball, and two play structures. The other half of the building contains another eight rooms that the landlord has tried to rent for three years so far, but to no avail. EMS is considering renting this space to add to the current facilities. Although EMS has been at this address for only two years, classrooms are beautifully decorated and a mural is already taking shape in a hallway. The facility meets all state and federal health and safety regulations and is handicapped accessible. A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) issued by the Division of Fire Safety for this building is on file at the Agency.

The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. §906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students. The curriculum is process oriented and intended to challenge the individual learning needs of all students. Each student has an IEP established with one of the five sending Local Education Agencies and students are able to maintain progress and often graduate from their sending school. Academic instruction and therapeutic groups occur in small group settings—grades 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12—but students also work individually much of the time. At the time of the visit, 16

students were enrolled. While the school is prepared to serve kindergarten students, sending schools have yet to refer any kindergarten students.

The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. The Regional Director of NFI oversees the budgetary process for the school and oversees the EMS Director, who oversees the daily operation of the school. There are three classroom teachers, one licensed special educator, three classroom counselors, one school-based clinician, three one-to-one individual aides, and one office manager. A review of the audit submitted with the application for reapproval indicates that the school is financially sound.

The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records are in good order. Fire drill and evacuation drill records are also in good order.

The school maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional hours each year that is not less than that required of a public school serving the same grades.

The school has a policy on prevention of harassment of students that is as stringent as the Agency's model policy. This policy, along with other policies –admissions, discipline, etc. –is to be found in immaculately maintained student/family and staff handbooks.

Summary: East Meadow School is an impeccably run school. Every “i” is dotted, and every “t” is crossed. EMS creates a positive community that focuses on mutual respect and where staff and students work collaboratively to develop safe and trusting relationships. The curriculum is process oriented and intended to challenge the individual learning needs of all students.

Respectfully Submitted:
Brian Morgan
May 4, 2017