

Royal Free Hospital children's school at Konstam Centre

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By Mike Brooke Reporter



A new school campus has been opened for children in hospital and other youngsters who struggle to attend mainstream education.

The campus has been opened by the Royal Free Hospital Children's school at the historic Konstam building in Hampstead, with the ribbon cut by former teaching assistant-turned-actress Melissa Johns.

It provides education for young patients aged five to 16 in the paediatric wards at the Royal Free, alongside outreach programmes previously run from two separate sites, which are now at the Konstam Centre in Chester Road, off Swain's Lane.

"This relocation gives us greater stability," headteacher Alex Yates said. "Our outreach services now operate under one roof for the first time, which means we can focus on meeting needs and increasing the number of youngsters we can support."

The school also runs alternative education for youngsters going through medical or mental health issues, including those under the care of the Royal Free's eating disorders service who are unable to go to a mainstream school.

It has specialist support in educational, speech and drama therapy, with 40 youngsters currently getting full or part-time learning. It also does therapy dog sessions, weekly visits to an equine centre and sports activities at the Royal Free's recreation club and Pirate Castle centre in Camden Lock.

One former pupil called Jack, now aged 25, who spoke at the opening, revealed how he "didn't engage with mainstream education but wanted to come to school". He praised the work of the centre as essential.



The centre has been refurbished with cash from Camden Council and is now also able to provide space for a nursery for Highgate's Brookfield Primary School.

Cllr Marcus Boyland said: "Moving this service to the Konstam Centre is making a huge difference to children and is providing long-term stability for the school. This is an outstanding school for vulnerable children who are not able to get mainstream education."

Lessons are also run for youngsters in Royal Free wards, along with other programmes at the Konstam Centre for up to 50 youngsters. The Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust serves Camden, Barnet and parts of Haringey and Enfield.

The Konstam building was opened originally as a children's hospital in 1922 by the Konstam family, named after two brothers killed on the Western Front in the First World War.