

The Dominie School

55 Warriner Gardens, Battersea, London SW11 4DX

Inspection dates

9–11 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school's proprietor and principal leads the school with passion, vision and drive. She and her colleagues have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Arrangements for personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Leaders care deeply about pupils and focus on developing the 'whole child'. Raising their self-esteem is an absolute priority.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and parents and carers trust the school's staff to keep their children as safe as possible.
- Pupils love learning at The Dominie. The curriculum is rich, balanced and deep. In addition to the focused and effective support pupils receive in English and mathematics, pupils enjoy a range of other subjects and activities, including philosophy, drama, music, art, sports, a range of enriching trips and an annual residential visit.
- Parents are extremely happy. Every parent on Parent View would recommend the school.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are good because teachers and therapists work together to meet pupils' specific learning needs. Teachers carefully plan interesting and engaging lessons which facilitate good progress, especially in English and mathematics. However, leaders are developing a new system for monitoring progress across the wider curriculum as closely as they do in the core subjects.
- Leaders' formal checks on how well teachers are performing lack detail. There is no indication of measurable success criteria or impact on pupils' progress and development.
- Governance is developing. The proprietor has the ad-hoc support of external professionals and is now in the process of convening a formal advisory body.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders and teachers consistently and accurately identify pupils' starting points and accurately record, monitor and evaluate their progress across the wider curriculum
 - checks on teachers' performance are more focused, and have a measurable impact on pupils' progress and development
 - the proprietor convenes an advisory body to provide formal external support and challenge in order to drive further improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- Parents, staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about The Dominie. Parents consistently told the inspector how pleased they are with their children's personal development, how communicative staff are and praised the effectiveness of the truly personalised approach.
- The core curriculum is effective in meeting pupils' specific learning needs, and is rich in creative experiences. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning at the school. In addition to the predominant focus on developing pupils' reading, writing, spelling, speaking and numeracy skills, pupils study science, topics (which include humanities and religious education), physical education, music, art, drama and philosophy.
- The school successfully develops the 'whole child'. In addition to the core curriculum offer, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy are made available to pupils, as appropriate. There is an engaging assembly programme and weekly personal, social, health and economic education sessions, which have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a significant extra-curricular offer, which includes a range of clubs, trips and experiences. Recent trips have included the Museum of London as part of pupils' study of the Romans, London Zoo, which is linked to their study of South America and evolution, and a farm visit to learn about nutrition. Pupils told the inspector how much they enjoy the regular visits from inspiring figures, such as authors and illustrators.
- Leaders ensure that the school provides pupils with an inclusive, caring environment. There is a consistently tranquil atmosphere and the focus is always on learning and achievement. Staff are committed to preparing pupils for their next steps as well-rounded citizens, and successfully develop their understanding of equality, tolerance and respect.
- There is an effective programme for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. It includes formal termly visits to classrooms and regular checks on pupils' workbooks and teachers' planning. Leaders consider their observations and feedback as part of the school's appraisal system for teachers. However, checks on teachers' performance are basic, and do not always consider pupils' progress and personal development. As a result, the system does not explicitly and formally hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make.

Governance

- There are currently no formal arrangements for governance.
- The proprietor is in the process of convening an advisory body. The constitution is in development, and members will include professionals who already support the school, for example in relation to the management of formal complaints.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders successfully facilitate a culture of care, which pervades the school's work.
- The school is a small community with a high staff ratio. Safeguarding training for all staff is thorough and regular, and appropriately considers national, local and internal policies and procedures. Concerns are exceptionally rare, and leaders fully understand their statutory responsibilities.
- Parents told the inspector that they unequivocally trusted the school to keep their children safe. Pupils spoken to unanimously confirmed that they feel safe in their school.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance and is available on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good and successfully enables pupils to feel positive about coming to school, often following previous negative educational experiences. The school's approach dramatically improves pupils' confidence, which in turn readies them for learning.
- High-quality teaching, supported by a rich array of effectively deployed resources, enables pupils with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties to make good progress in their literacy skills.
- Pupils learn well across the curriculum, thanks to strong relationships, small classes, high levels of support and personalised planning. Lessons are interesting, engaging and interactive. As a result, pupils are excited and enthusiastic about their learning.
- The school is a deeply caring and nurturing place. Teachers carefully balance support and patience with very high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Rigorous checks on pupils' starting points in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics inform teachers' planning and leaders monitor and review pupils' progress in these areas very carefully. However, while pupils' work shows that they make generally good progress in all subjects, leaders are currently developing their system to identify pupils' starting points and subsequent progress across the wider curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils typically arrive at The Dominie with very low self-esteem. Staff prioritise the development of pupils' social and emotional well-being. As a result, pupils' confidence and self-belief rise rapidly.
- Parents are thrilled with their children's progress, which they described as 'tremendous' and 'phenomenal'. They told the inspector that The Dominie has 'changed their child's life' and that they 'couldn't be happier' with the school's work in giving pupils a real chance to feel, and be, successful.
- Pupils and parents confirmed the school's effective safeguarding arrangements. They were all confident in telling the inspector that there are no concerns about safety. Pupils

say there is no bullying, and that everybody behaves very well and is kind to one another.

- Pupils have a very strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online, and about being healthy. The school's rich curriculum also supports pupils to become caring, tolerant and respectful citizens.
- Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps, and the vast majority successfully proceed to mainstream secondary schools.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave impeccably. Whether in lessons or around the building, they are polite, cooperative and respectful. In every class, pupils work as hard as they can.
- Staff understand pupils' specific learning needs. They use the school's behaviour system consistently to raise pupils' confidence, while maintaining exceptionally high standards of behaviour.
- There are no records of sanctions for misbehaviour or bullying, because there have not been any such incidents since the previous inspection.
- Pupils consistently told the inspector that they were excited about coming to school every morning. The overwhelming majority attend very regularly. Where there is absence, it is typically for medical reasons. Leaders robustly monitor absence and take swift action when it falls below their high standards.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils generally arrive at the school with very low self-esteem and many have not made enough progress in their previous schools. After just a short time at The Dominie, pupils typically make excellent progress in their emotional well-being, self-esteem and social skills. Over time, all pupils, including the most able, make good progress across the curriculum, especially in their reading, writing, spelling and numeracy skills.
- The majority of pupils who leave The Dominie have made up for any lost time and proceed successfully to a range of schools. For example, at the end of the academic year in 2017, all leavers proceeded to secondary schools, the vast majority of which were mainstream schools.
- Termly reports to parents provide a detailed narrative about pupils' progress in every subject. They exemplify the good progress pupils are making across the curriculum. However, while each pupil's attainment in their core skills is checked to confirm their starting points on entry to the school, this is not the case across the curriculum. Leaders are currently developing their assessment system to provide similarly robust information about pupils' progress and outcomes in all subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	101077
DfE registration number	212/6368
Inspection number	10041395

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anne O'Doherty
Principal	Anne O'Doherty
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,700
Telephone number	020 7720 8783
Website	www.thedominie.co.uk
Email address	info@thedominie.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–19 February 2015

Information about this school

- The Dominie School is an independent special day school for pupils who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and dysgraphia.
- A very small minority of pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed by their local authority.
- The school's last inspection was a full standard inspection in February 2015.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed a range of teaching and learning, some jointly with the headteacher. He met with two groups of pupils and held a meeting with teachers.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor (who is also the school's principal) and the school's management assistant.
- The inspector considered the school's information about pupils' progress and their attendance and behaviour. He also scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also met with two parents and spoke to another by telephone.
- The inspector considered the 10 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including policies, logs and other information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspector toured the premises and considered additional information in relation to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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