



Office for Standards  
in Education

# The Dominie School

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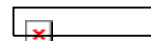
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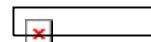
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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY



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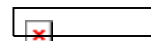
## Purpose and scope of the inspection



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This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school



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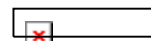
The Dominie is a small independent preparatory school for children of average ability but uneven achievement. It specialises in teaching and supporting pupils with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, perceptual and language difficulties and manipulative and fine motor problems. The school is situated in a modern business complex close to Battersea Park and was opened in 1987 for up to 32 pupils between the ages of six and 13. There are currently 31 pupils on the school's roll, 20 of whom are boys. It is registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexics (CReSTeD) and is a corporate member of the British Dyslexia Association.

The majority of places at the school are privately funded but there are a few which are funded wholly or partly by the local education authority (LEA) in which the pupils live.

The school aims to enable the children to reach their potential in a focussed environment, to promote their individual strengths and talents and to help the parents to help their children.

The school's senior management team comprises the headteacher, who is also the proprietor and the director of education. The headteacher, as well as fulfilling her organisational and managerial duties has an extensive teaching commitment. In addition to her managerial responsibilities the director monitors the quality of teaching and learning, ensures the curriculum is meeting the needs of the pupils and liaises with secondary schools and parents as their children reach the age of transfer.

## Summary of main findings



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The Dominie School is a very good school with a significant number of strengths. It has a very good ethos which encourages and celebrates the pupils' progress and achievements. The headteacher and director provide excellent leadership, promote excellent relationships between the staff, the pupils and their families and carefully adapt the curriculum to meet each pupil's individual needs. They make good progress in their academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The

its pupils.

### What the school does well

- It provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is well structured to meet the pupils' needs.
- The quality of teaching is good in all lessons and often very good.
- The pupils make good progress in their studies.
- The school supports effectively the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher and director provide excellent leadership, ensure the school is well managed and enable the staff to work effectively together as a strong team.
- It provides a safe and secure learning environment for the pupils and makes very good use of the resources available and the accommodation.
- It promotes excellent relationships between the staff, the pupils and the parents and gives them effective support in their choice of secondary school for their children.

### What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

The school complies with all the regulations.

### COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

#### 1. The quality of education provided by the school

#### The quality of the curriculum

The Dominie provides a broad and balanced curriculum which covers the National Curriculum, including personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. It also offers opportunities for speech therapy and support in the social use of language for those pupils who need it. In

skills and encourage them to play together and enjoy each other's company.

The school has produced good policies and schemes of work for all subjects, which make appropriate reference to documents published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the pupils' personal targets. From these detailed termly plans are produced which show what each pupil is intended to learn. As work progresses it is carefully monitored by the director to ensure the pupils are making steady progress, especially those who have statements of special educational need. Parents are kept well informed of the work planned as well as their child's progress. Homework is set regularly and both this and the information they receive about the curriculum, enables parents to contribute positively to their children's education in partnership with the school.

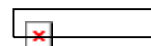
Planning places appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy and each day starts with a period of reading. The rest of the morning is devoted to English and mathematics, with pupils grouped according to ability. Additional literacy and language support for individual pupils is provided by a specialist teacher and a speech and language therapist, who work part-time at the school.

Science, PSHE, citizenship and the foundation subjects are timetabled during the afternoons, when educational visits linked to classwork are arranged. The school makes good use of a local sports centre and occasionally Battersea Park for physical education lessons, which include regular opportunities to swim.

Activities involving design and technology (DT) and information and communication technology (ICT) support study in other subjects such as mathematics, history and science. However, the school recognises that it is difficult to track their progressive development and enable the pupils to build new skills and knowledge on their previous understanding. As a result it is sensibly planning to introduce specific DT and ICT lessons to establish and advance key skills.

Work in history, geography, science, music, art, drama, PSHE and citizenship is carefully planned around a common theme, providing a more relevant and cohesive approach to study.

## The quality of teaching and assessment



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During the inspection 28 lessons or parts of lessons were observed, and in all of them the quality of teaching was at least good and often very good. All the staff are well qualified and have a very good knowledge of the pupils and their needs. All lessons are carefully planned, include several appropriate activities and maintain a good pace.

Relationships between pupils and staff and between the pupils themselves are excellent and work continues in a friendly, purposeful atmosphere. The pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with adults and good use is made of resources to promote learning. For example, a study of the properties and structure of different rock samples using hand lenses resulted in some good, close observational drawing of the samples and imaginative discussions between the pupils and staff about the crystals and fossils they could see.

In the best lessons there are opportunities for the pupils to work in pairs or small groups, discuss their findings and collaborate in practical investigations while practising their speaking and listening skills with each other. In addition, assignments are prepared to extend the most able pupils once the activities set for the whole group have been completed. All staff pay careful attention to the pupils' individual targets when preparing activities and in the most successful lessons, the teachers or classroom assistants were able to praise and identify aspects of the pupils' work which were leading towards the achievement of one of their targets. This provided encouragement as well as making the target a more realistic and relevant goal for the pupils. To improve the good quality of teaching

even further such strategies need to be included in all lessons.

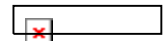
The school maintains detailed records of each pupils' progress. These are well used by teachers when preparing new assignments for the pupils. Their work is marked sensitively and all staff use carefully considered questions to check a pupil's understanding during lessons. Standardised tests to monitor aspects of literacy such as reading, spelling and comprehension are administered twice a year and the pupils achieve success in the English Speaking Board's graded examinations.

As a direct result of the good teaching they are receiving, the pupils are making good progress in all their studies and are proud of their own and their classmates' successes. Their concentration and attitudes to study are improving and they are increasingly able to apply their well learned skills and understanding in new situations with growing confidence and success.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**



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The school places a high priority on the development of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence by the pupils and achieves this successfully. This is a strength of the school.

An example of this was the end of term presentation for parents, in which, through drama, art and music, each class group was able to display aspects of the historical topic they had been studying during the previous three months. Pupils performed confidently and enjoyed the experience. For many of the pupils this was a significant achievement and demonstrated considerable personal improvement and development since admission to the school. Pupils also demonstrate self-confidence and maturity when on visits and out of school activities.

The school has high expectations of the pupils' conduct throughout their time at school. They understand and respond positively to the simple rules provided, have a clear idea of what is right and what is unacceptable and conform to the expectations very well indeed. This is especially noticeable during breaks and at lunchtime when they are free to choose and develop their independence and social skills. The prefect system, which enables all the older pupils to demonstrate their independence and initiative sensibly, is a very good example of how well the pupils respond to the opportunities provided.

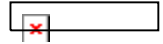
Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are excellent. Older pupils set a good example to younger pupils and very good role models are provided by staff. These are reflected in the manner in which the pupils show care and support for each other. They take pride in their own and other pupils' achievement and success. This was very evident in the presentation of certificates and other prizes at the end of term gathering.

Lessons in citizenship provide the pupils with a developing awareness and knowledge of public institutions and services in this country. This is widened by work in geography which gives the pupils an understanding of the differences in other countries. The pupils show good knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures and show respect for different cultural traditions.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



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The school gives paramount importance to ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Parents indicated that they felt confident that the pupils are safe and secure in the school and on visits and activities outside school.

An extensive range of detailed policies and procedures have been created and implemented relating to the prevention of bullying, child protection, First Aid and health and safety. There are very good procedures for ensuring safety on visits and activities outside the school. These are effectively applied by all staff and regularly monitored by senior management.

There are suitable policies and procedures to promote good behaviour which describe the sanctions to be adopted should a pupil misbehave. Detailed records are kept of the very rare occasions when they have been applied. The pupils' behaviour in the school and on visits and activities outside the school is very good.

Very effective arrangements ensure the pupils' safety at all times. The arrangements for greeting pupils on arrival ensure a calm and orderly start to the school day, with pupils settling quickly to work. The departure of pupils at the end of the day is similarly calm and well organised.

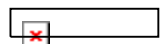
Fire precautions are followed diligently, with regular fire drills, which are carefully recorded. The arrangements are carefully monitored by both the school management and the Fire Authority.

The school maintains an admission register and an attendance register. Both of these are kept in a manner which is in accordance with the requirements of the regulations.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



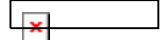
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The practice of checking the suitability of staff including screening through the Criminal Records Bureau is thorough. Their planning, teaching and record keeping is regularly monitored by the director who is able to recognise and promote their strengths and provide support where required. Newcomers quickly establish themselves as part of the strong staff team. The headteacher, who has a considerable daily teaching commitment, and the director together provide excellent leadership and ensure that the school is effectively organised and managed.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**



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The school provides a safe and secure learning environment for all its pupils and staff.

The headteacher and director welcome the pupils each morning and see them safely off the premises each evening. Access during the day is managed through an answer phone by the main door, thus ensuring the security of the premises.

The school successfully meets all the regulations related to the safety of the premises and keeps a record of its regular fire drills and health and safety inspections.

The rooms vary in size but all are suitable for the number of pupils in each class. They are well furnished and contain attractive displays of the pupils' work. Space for the storage of equipment is at a premium but the staff make good use of that which is available. Books and other resources regularly used by the pupils are arranged practically around the rooms to afford easy access.

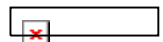
The library is well stocked with a good range of fiction and reference books. The recently established computer suite is an excellent facility which is being increasingly well used.

The school makes good use of Battersea Park, a five minute walk away, during the lunchtime break. A local sports centre is used for weekly swimming and physical education lessons. Supervision and safety measures are followed effectively by all the staff involved at all times.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**



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The school provides clear, good quality information to parents of pupils and prospective pupils. Other more detailed information is readily available on request, as required by the regulations.

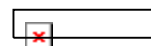
Responses to the parents' questionnaire indicated that they feel well informed about the school's arrangements as well as the progress of their children. There are regular termly written reports and meetings between staff and parents as well as almost daily informal communication.

Parents appreciate the support they receive from the school when considering options for the next stage of education.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**



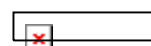
The school has very effective procedures for handling any complaints which might be made. They have been recently reviewed to ensure that they comply fully with current requirements.

The parents indicated that they felt confident that they could raise any concerns with the school and that these would be dealt with promptly and efficiently.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**SCHOOL DETAILS**



Name of school:	The Dominie School
DfES Number	212/6368
Type of school:	A special day preparatory school for pupils with specific learning difficulties
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	6-13
Number on roll:	31
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Fees:	Day: £12,600 per annum.
Address of school:	Mandeville Courtyard 142 Battersea Park Road London SW11 4BN
Email address:	lrdominie@aol.com
Telephone number:	0207 720 8783
Fax number:	0207 720 8783
Headteacher:	Mrs Lesley Robertson
Proprietor:	Mrs Lesley Robertson
Date of Inspection	8 - 10 December 2003
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Andrew Littlewood



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