

The Dominie

Independent Special School

DCSF Registration Number	212/6368
Unique Reference Number	101077
Inspection number	322012
Inspection dates	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focussed principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The Dominie is an independent co-educational school which specialises in teaching and supporting pupils with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia, perceptual and language difficulties and manipulative and fine motor problems. The Dominie's aim is to enable each child to have the opportunity to achieve their personal best through intensive intervention and support and to become a confident learner with access to a full curriculum, modified where necessary to meet their needs. 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 thirteen. There are currently 30 pupils on roll. The school is registered with the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexia and is a corporate member of the British Dyslexia Association. Pupils are admitted throughout the school year according to the need of the pupil and assessed according to the school procedures. The last inspection of the school by Ofsted was in December 2003 when it met all the regulations for registration.

Evaluation of the school

The Dominie is a distinctive school providing a good quality of education for its pupils who are well cared for and make good progress. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and many pupils who failed to thrive elsewhere have made considerable progress not only in their academic ability but also in their social skills. The school meets all the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. The school teaches the subjects of the National Curriculum, which they have carefully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. During the morning pupils are taught in small groups which are tailored to meet their individual needs, in separate subjects for mathematics and in English, this includes aspects of grammar, creative writing and comprehension. Reading and

spelling are also taught in small groups. In the afternoons, the rest of the curriculum is taught in larger mostly age related groups. Pupils have a weekly session in swimming and gymnastics at a local leisure centre and the school makes good use of the nearby park for recreation. Each pupil has a detailed individual education plan, which is used effectively and includes a wide range of appropriate activities, including those designed to meet the needs of pupils who have a statement of educational need. A range of after school clubs and outside visits further enhances the curriculum. The school makes effective use of their location close to central London and visits museums and galleries, often connected to topics the pupils are studying.

The quality of teaching is good with many outstanding features. It is effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress in their learning. The teachers plan their lessons carefully and adapt their teaching sensitively to meet the needs of each individual pupil. The lessons are interesting, engage the attention of the pupils and are sufficiently challenging to meet their varied needs. The staff are kind and patient and relationships are very positive at all levels. An older pupil reported that *'lessons are really nice, it's really fun here, you can do lots of stuff. I am dyslexic and this school is giving me lots of help.'* The pupils respond very positively in lessons, enjoy their learning and have the confidence to ask for help and explanation when they do not understand. The good ratio of adults to pupils enables staff to give high levels of support. Staff are very good at supporting each pupil as well as involving all members of the small groups in the learning. Staff work very well together. Their assessment of pupils' learning is good. Each stage of the pupil's progress, however small, is carefully noted. This information is then used to inform the teachers' planning. The school has identified in their plan that they are seeking to further improve these procedures by developing systems for analysing and improving the effectiveness of assessment and tracking systems to ensure a more accurate and systematic use of progress data to inform teachers' planning. Parents are given appropriately detailed written reports and have very regular meetings with staff. The school runs an 'open door' policy and the parents can make appointments to speak to staff if they wish.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. This is a small, 'family' community where each individual is respected and embraced as part of the school. Some pupils have failed to thrive at their previous school but during their time at the Dominic their self-esteem and confidence increase significantly. The vast majority of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and were overwhelmingly positive, adding comments such as, *'It is a wonderful school.... My child has made huge progress.'* The pupils' attendance is good and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils report that they are happy at school and many parents confirm this. There is a welcoming, nurturing atmosphere where there are only two school rules 'Be Kind' and 'Don't Run'. Pupils are given an understanding of how public institutions work through their visits outside school. Cultural awareness is increased through the teaching of religious

education and personal, social and health education and citizenship. As well as developing good relationships with their peers and teachers, they show respect and understanding for those whose beliefs and cultures may be different from their own. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and inter-personal skills. These make an effective contribution to their wellbeing and prepare them well for their future education and later life. Pupils play an active role in collecting for worthy causes in the local and wider world community. They are encouraged through the school council and other means to take responsibility.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The school effectively implements a wide range of policies, including those for anti-bullying, health and safety, child protection and visits outside school which support procedures for ensuring the safety of its pupils. It is a safe place to work and learn. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and the pupils are encouraged to bring healthy food for lunch. The school undertakes careful checks on all new staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and holds a single central register of such checks. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop systems for analysing the use of the information gained through assessment to inform teachers' planning, as outlined in school plans.

School details

Name of school	The Dominie		
DCSF number	212/6368		
Unique reference number	101077		
Type of school	Special (for pupils with specific learning difficulties)		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1987		
Age range of pupils	6-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 16	Girls: 14	Total: 30
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Annual fees	£ 17,400		
Address of school	55 Warriner Gardens Battersea London SW11 4DX		
Telephone number	020 7720 8783		
Fax number	020 76224357		
Email address	aodoherty@thedominie.co.uk		
Senior Teacher	Mrs V Payne		
Proprietor/Principal	Miss A O'Doherty		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	21 May 2008		