

The Dominie School Limited

55 Warriner Gardens, Battersea, London, SW11 4DX

Inspection dates 17–19 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- The school is exceptionally well led by an inspiring Principal who motivates teachers, therapists and assistants so that they enable pupils to excel in their learning and personal development.
- As a result of consistently careful planning and detailed knowledge of individual pupils’ abilities, teachers and therapists enable pupils to overcome their learning difficulties and to make outstanding progress.
- Pupils achieve excellent outcomes across a wide range of subjects and activities. In addition to reading, writing, communication and mathematics, they benefit greatly from subjects including public speaking, philosophy, touch-typing and swimming.
- Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary. They are consistently courteous and thoughtful in lessons, around the school and when they are out in the local community.
- The school’s policies and procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are rigorously implemented and, as a result, pupils feel safe in a school where they flourish.
- The school’s proprietor, the Principal, has developed strong and effective procedures to ensure that all aspects of the school’s operation are consistently monitored and improved. As a result, all the Independent School Standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice. The inspector observed 10 lessons and paid short visits to six others. Two lessons were jointly observed with the school's Principal.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about it. He held meetings with the proprietor, who is the Principal, the school's management assistant, staff members and pupils.
- He looked at documentation including policy statements, schemes of work, teachers' planning and records of pupils' progress and of staff training.
- Fourteen responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire were taken into account. In addition, the inspector met with the parents and carers of six pupils. Nine questionnaire responses from members of staff were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Dominie is an independent co-educational day 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 school is owned and operated by the Principal. She is supported by the school management assistant who is a former headteacher. There are no middle managers in the school.
- It is situated in a Victorian building that has been converted into a modern business complex close to Battersea Park. It was opened in 1987 and is registered for up to 32 pupils between the ages of six and 13.
- There are currently 26 boys and girls on roll aged between 7 and 11.
- Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. None are in the care of their local authority.
- The school is registered with the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexia (CReSTeD) and is also a member of the British Dyslexia Association.
- The school uses the Latchmere Leisure Centre for weekly swimming and physical education lessons.
- The Dominie's aim is 'to enable each child to achieve their personal best through high-quality teaching, specialist support and a relevant curriculum that meets their needs'.
- The last inspection of the school by Ofsted was in November 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers make the very best use of their excellent marking by:
 - making sure all pupils have sufficient opportunities to respond to guidance designed to show them how to further improve and develop their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school's Principal provides inspirational and extremely effective leadership. As a result, the whole staff team of teachers, therapists and assistants are highly motivated to provide the best possible opportunities for the pupils' learning and development. In this environment, pupils flourish.
- The Principal regularly visits lessons to gauge the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of the pupils' learning. Teachers' planning and marking are carefully and frequently scrutinised. These activities enable the Principal to provide valuable advice and guidance and to enable teachers to develop their performance well. Teachers make good use of this support to improve pupils' achievements.
- Detailed monitoring of all aspects of the school's operation ensures that the Principal and her senior colleague know the school very well. Policies are thoroughly reviewed each year and revised where necessary. Developments are well planned and carried out efficiently. Because of this the school is able to adapt to meet the changing and individual needs of the pupils extremely well.
- The school's varied and interesting curriculum is carefully structured to respond to the learning needs of pupils with dyslexia and associated learning difficulties. Strong emphasis is placed on mathematics and English. Daily lessons in reading, spelling, phonics (the sounds that letters make) and handwriting enable pupils to practise and extend their skills. Wide-ranging topics are highly effective in developing pupils' interest in science, history and geography. Philosophy, drama, art and music broaden pupils' experience and deepen their awareness of the world. Very well-led physical education, games and swimming lessons support pupils' physical development to great effect.
- The school places a high priority on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are helped to understand the importance of tolerance, and equality of opportunity is strongly promoted. As a result, an atmosphere of mutual respect and fairness pervades the school. These elements, along with the school's curriculum, help them to understand and appreciate British values, and prepare them thoroughly for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education is promoted very effectively through weekly lessons as well as the content of assemblies and conversations with form tutors. These activities help pupils to learn to look after themselves well.
- An excellent range of facilities and equipment is available and is used very well to meet students' needs. The school has a well-stocked library and a good range of specialist equipment for science, music, art and information and communication technology. These support pupils' learning and enable them to make excellent progress.
- Staff recruitment and training are very well managed. Robust arrangements ensure that all staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. As a result, the Independent School Standards relating to safeguarding and child protection are met.
- All the required information for parents, carers and others is made available on the proprietor's website or in the school's brochure and parent information pack. The school's complaints policy meets requirements and is well publicised.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school's proprietor is the Principal. She has developed an excellent range of procedures to check that the school continues to comply with the Independent School Standards.
 - Valuable information about pupils' achievements and teachers' performance is gathered regularly and used very effectively to generate continuous improvement.
 - Very effective arrangements are in use to reward good teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are consistently considerate and courteous to each other, to staff members and to visitors. This is both in school and on their regular trips to the local park and to places of interest.
- Their enthusiasm for learning is shown by their very good attendance. Many parents and carers comment about the rapid improvement they see in their children's attitude to school when start at the Dominie. They are ready for work at the start of each lesson and are, almost always, busy and engaged with their activities through to the very end.

- Pupils' excellent behaviour enables all to learn to the best of their abilities. They wait patiently when they need to respond to a teacher, and they encourage one another to excel.
- The whole staff team implements the carefully crafted behaviour policy very well. Pupils know about the high standards that are expected and how they will be rewarded for working hard and behaving well.
- The school successfully implements an effective strategy that results in bullying being extremely rare in the school. Pupils understand what bullying is and how they should behave so that it does not occur. They also gain valuable awareness of the dangers of cyber bullying. In addition they understand about bullying based on prejudice about peoples' differences and how they can avoid this taking place both in school and more widely.
- Pupils take part in many very effective activities that, together with their subject lessons, help them to learn well about the expectations of modern British society. They learn with interest about the way that organisations such as the fire service and police serve the community. They develop their awareness of right and wrong as they follow the school's simple but effective school rules. They learn about and gain an appreciation of other cultures through assemblies and through their topic lessons and discussions. They speak thoughtfully and without prejudice about the differences between people. Pupils raise funds actively for a variety of local and international charities. This includes a school in Tanzania where their fund raising efforts have led to a new classroom being built.
- A clearly stated policy prohibits staff members from promoting any partisan political views in any activity associated with the school. The Principal ensures that the policy is carried out during her visits to lessons.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe in school, and their parents and carers strongly agree.
- The school staff create a warm working and learning atmosphere in the school. This provides them with the security they need for their learning to excel and for them to thrive as individuals.
- The Principal is the designated lead person for safeguarding and child protection. Together with her deputy in this role, she has received the required higher level of training. She and the school's human resources assistant are trained in safe recruitment. Valuable staff training in child protection has been delivered to all staff members who have regular opportunities to refresh and deepen their awareness and understanding in this area.
- All the checks that are required to ensure that staff members are suitable to work with children are carried out and recorded clearly in a single register.
- Policies designed to keep pupils safe are robust and consistently well implemented. These include policies about the health and safety of pupils and staff as well as fire safety and first aid. Highly effective arrangements are carried out extremely well to make sure that pupils are safe when they are away from the school. This includes the daily visits to play in the park, to the local leisure centre for games and physical education lessons and for educational excursions further afield.
- The school provides highly valuable advice to parents and carers in the areas of sex and relationships education and safe use of the internet and social media. This ensures that pupils receive the same guidance at home as at school and helps to keep them safe.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Pupils learn exceptionally well as a result of highly successful teaching.
- Teachers plan lessons that are varied, interesting and engaging. They are carefully tailored to the pupils' abilities and use many, very effective techniques that help individuals to overcome the effect of their learning difficulties. As a result pupils respond with enthusiasm. They are keen to work and to take part busily in all the activities set.
- The school has recently extended its processes to gauge and track pupils' attainment and their progress. Very effective systems are in place and subject to continuous evaluation to ensure the accuracy of the levels that pupils are awarded in their various subjects.
- An extensive range of thorough assessments keeps teachers fully informed about what each pupil knows and can do. Targets are carefully set and evaluated so that teachers can help the pupils to make rapid progress as they build their skills and knowledge.
- Teachers are adept at checking pupils' learning during lessons. They make sure that they have mastered a skill before moving to the next. Through this approach pupils become confident about their abilities and this inspires them to try harder and work even more effectively.

- Very successful daily lessons in reading, writing, communication and mathematics help pupils to develop their skills very well. These are reinforced across the curriculum so that pupils consistently gain confidence in the application of skills in different contexts.
- Teachers set daily homework tasks that are carefully designed to enable pupils to practise and develop even more confidence in the skills and techniques they have learned. Teachers mark class work and homework exceptionally well. Their praise motivates and encourages pupils and their comments show them just what they need to do to improve their work. However, occasionally, teachers do not make sure that pupils have carried out some of the corrections suggested by their marking.
- In the vast majority of lessons, teaching assistants assist individual pupils to benefit as well as they can from the teaching. Teaching assistants respond very well to the clear instructions from class teachers so that each pupil has the best opportunity to do well.
- The speech and language therapists and physiotherapists work seamlessly with teachers to make sure that each pupil has the particular support they need to enable them to make rapid progress. This includes individually tailored equipment such as pencil grips or very small group sessions to develop social skills in conversation. The therapists' expert advice is used to great effect to provide teachers with many valuable insights into ways of enabling pupils to learn and to overcome their difficulties.
- Specialist teachers inspire pupils with their lessons in philosophy, music, drama and art. They bring high levels of expertise and excellent subject knowledge that inspire pupils and extend their knowledge, awareness and skill.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Inspection evidence, including the results of regular reading and spelling tests, and the careful assessment of progress by teachers show that almost all pupils make exceptional progress. Many start at the school with attainment in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics that is low for their age. They make progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics, at a rate greater than normally expected. During their time in the school, most pupils catch up very well so that their attainment is comparable with pupils nationally.
- Pupils learn to enjoy reading while they are at the school. When they read aloud they express themselves confidently and with meaning. They read at home and at school and can name a good range of books they have read and subjects they have read about. One pupil commented with pride, and some surprise in his voice, 'I now read even when I don't have to!'
- Each year, all pupils strive successfully to impress the examiner with their performance in public speaking examinations. At their differing levels of ability, all are awarded qualifications with grades of merit or distinction. Highly successful annual drama performances showcase the wide range of skills pupils develop in the expressive arts. These activities, together with the sports day and swimming gala, are highly successful in building and demonstrating pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Those pupils with statements of special educational needs make strong progress in all subjects including in English and mathematics. They work towards their targets and catch up very well.
- The most able pupils develop their abilities across a wide range of subjects and activities. Most start at the school working at a level that is well below their own potential. They catch up quickly and extend the range and breadth of what they know and can do extremely well.
- These achievements mean that when pupils leave the school they are able to transfer successfully to mainstream secondary schools.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	101077
Inspection number	454241
DfE registration number	212/6368

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	Special school for pupils with specific learning difficulties
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	6 – 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anne O'Doherty
Chair	Not applicable
Principal	Anne O'Doherty
Date of previous school inspection	November 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,200
Telephone number	020 7720 8783
Email address	info@thedomimie.co.uk

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