

Dallington School

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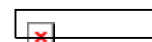
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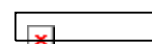
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Introduction and summary

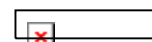


Purpose and scope of the inspection



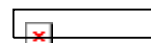
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



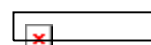
Dallington School is an independent, non-selective day school for boys and girls aged 3 - 11, in the Clerkenwell district of the London Borough of Islington, close to the boundary of the City of London. The school is privately owned. It was established in 1978 by the present headteacher, who is also the proprietor. There are 176 full-time pupils on roll, and nine part-time.

Summary of main findings



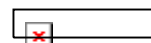
Dallington is a successful school which provides all its pupils with a good education and which prepares them well for their secondary education. Teaching throughout the school is good, and the school enables pupils to develop independent learning skills. Teachers know the pupils well and take their individual strengths and weaknesses into account when planning lessons. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the provision for creative and aesthetic expression is a strength of the school. However, curriculum planning is weak and more attention needs to be paid to determining goals and to monitoring and evaluating provision. Relationships at all levels are very good and this helps pupils to be articulate and self-confident. Behaviour is excellent.

What the school does well



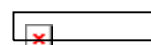
- the school is very good at understanding the needs of individual pupils;
- it provides them with a rich and varied educational experience, particularly in the area of creative expression;
- it is good at helping them to move on to selective secondary schools that are appropriate to their needs;
- it helps its pupils to become self-confident and articulate young people; and
- it communicates very well with parents about all aspects of their children's progress.

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



- set out its curriculum policy in writing, support it by appropriate plans and schemes of work and implement these effectively;
- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying;
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside of school;
- maintain an admission register;
- prior to the confirmation of their appointment, ensure that staff at the school have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB);
- ensure that arrangements for toilet and washroom facilities are appropriate, as detailed in Section 5;
- provide parents and prospective parents with further information as detailed in Section 6.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

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1. The quality of education provided by the school

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The quality of the curriculum

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Dallington is a successful school, but it has no overall curriculum policy set out in writing, and although there are schemes of work, these are too generalised and lack specific detail. The school needs a clear curriculum overview that details more precisely what is to be taught and indicates the progressive steps in pupils' learning, so that they can build systematically on what has gone before.

One of Dallington's chief aims is to achieve 'high academic standards in a creative and informal environment.' It is very successful in achieving this aim. It offers pupils a broad-based curriculum which includes all the areas of learning required by the regulations. At the same time, it prepares pupils very well for their secondary education, and most are able to move on to the schools of their choice. The school is particularly strong in its coverage of the creative and aesthetic areas. The lower and upper nurseries provide an exciting range of play-centred activities, based on the nationally recommended curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage.

Most teachers know the pupils very well and cater for individual strengths and weaknesses. However, as the school is aware, much of the planning both in the long and short term, is informal. Because learning objectives are not clearly defined, this has an impact on both the quality of teaching and the learning. Similarly, assessment is not used to help future planning, and this has the effect that the most able pupils in particular are not being sufficiently challenged because in many lessons, all pupils do the same work. Pupils on the special needs register are well supported and there is good additional regular support provided from outside agencies.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

☐

The teaching is good with some very effective features. None of the lessons observed was less than satisfactory and over two-thirds were taught well. The pupils make good progress.

The staff know the pupils very well and the family atmosphere in the school helps them to feel valued and confident. Relationships are very good and promote a feeling of trust which helps pupils of all abilities to contribute in lessons. They are encouraged to offer their ideas and opinions and, as a result, their speaking and listening skills are developed very effectively. All the staff prepare resources efficiently before lessons to ensure that the pupils have all they need to complete their work.

Resources are generally very good and are used effectively. In particular, good use is made of

information and communication technology (ICT), and in one lesson the children enjoyed using a programmable robot, which enhanced their achievement in control technology and mathematics. On the other hand, children in the upper and lower nurseries have limited opportunities for physical development because of the lack of large scale equipment.

An excellent music lesson was seen for pupils in Years 3 to 6. This was a very well planned lesson, including a very good range of music from different countries and eras. The lesson was an hour long but pupils remained attentive throughout and were very well behaved. In an English reading lesson, pupils from a small group in Year 3 worked very well together to formulate a recipe for a magical, mechanical potion. This was a well-thought out lesson, with a good balance of teacher direction and pupil investigation.

Pupils in Year 1 were totally involved in their project on 'toys old and new.' Even in their break times, they continued to construct complicated structures and made good use of observational skills in their drawings. In Year 2, they worked as pupils from 100 years ago, sewing samplers and making summer pudding and pancakes.

Lesson planning is not always satisfactory as there are not sufficiently clear learning objectives to help give lessons a sharper focus. Lessons were particularly effective when the objectives were shared with the pupils, so they understood what was expected of them. Staff use questioning well to test the pupils' understanding, and in some instances to provide an extra challenge. In the most effective lessons this helped the pupils to make rapid progress. In some lessons, however, the teaching did not always build sufficiently well on the pupils' prior attainment and so the learning was not as effective as it might have been. This was particularly the case for the most able pupils who, in a few instances, were not given challenging enough work.

The favourable adult to pupil ratio enables the pupils to receive a high level of adult attention and this helps them to learn more effectively. The staff encourage pupils to try their hardest and to think for themselves. The pupils are very responsive to this and their eagerness is clear to see. The pupils' personal confidence and self-esteem is very well promoted in lessons and during recreation periods. Most are given the opportunity to have their success recognised publicly at some point during the school week. The staff expect the pupils to behave well and they rise to this expectation.

Pupils are given frequent praise for good achievement in their work or conduct and this encourages them to try hard. They show a pride in their work and most of their books are neat and well kept. Good handwriting is clearly valued and most staff set a good example when they write on the board or mark books. Some staff mark books diligently, and the best marking contains perceptive comments to help the pupils to see what they need to do next to improve their work. However, some marking is confined to ticks and the occasional brief comment and when this happens, pupils are not as aware of what to do to improve.

The school uses a range of tests to assess pupils' attainment and these also give a useful indication of progress. Informal assessments begin in the nursery and are regularly undertaken in English, mathematics and verbal reasoning in subsequent classes. There is no written assessment policy to ensure consistency of practice. The pupils' books show that good progress is made by the majority of them over the school year in most subjects. Those who learn at a slower pace are helped very well and they too make good progress. Discussions with the pupils revealed that they are pleased with their progress. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make in the school.

Teaching is enhanced by the expertise provided by specialist staff in dance, music, French and ICT and the pupils' learning is enriched through a wide variety of educational visits and sporting activities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

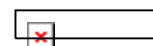
The school meets all but one of the regulations.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have a curriculum policy set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implemented effectively (paragraph 1(2)).

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



Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is very good. There are children from many cultural backgrounds and they are encouraged to discuss these with each other. Learning about each other and others' heritages is a natural and intrinsic part of daily life in the school. The school is situated in Clerkenwell, which lies close to the City of London and was formerly the centre of London's Italian community, and in the nursery class there was a bilingual week in which Italian was the target language. The teacher encouraged the children to respond to the register in Italian. Many of the signs around the school are in different languages. The school makes very good use of the surrounding historical environment and organises outside visits, which are reflected in the creative and aesthetic work within the school.

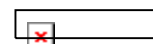
A significant feature of the school is the way in which it succeeds combining informality with a purposeful learning environment. It is characterised by excellent relationships and the feeling that both adults and children are engaged in a co-operative venture. The result of this is that pupils grow to be mature and self-confident and are able to take responsibility for themselves and each other. They are particularly good at working together in groups.

The week of the inspection coincided with the celebration of the Chinese New Year and in a music lesson for Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, which included a very good mixture of styles of music, there was a special emphasis on this. At different times of the year, the religious festivals of other traditions are also celebrated, and pupils are well aware of the diverse nature of the communities in the local area. On the last day of the inspection children from Year 4 took part in a production of a play entitled "The War of the Vegetables" which, in the form of a dramatised parable, highlighted the potential problems that can occur when people of different heritage and tradition have to live in close contact with each other. Pupils are aware of national and local institutions and of their role in the community.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has a written policy which promotes good behaviour amongst the pupils and it is successful in meeting the aims set out in it. It also gives details of the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving, however, no written records are kept of any sanctions used, and there have been no exclusions in recent years.

There is a health and safety policy and all staff have been trained in child protection procedures. Fire procedures include regular fire drills. There are no written policies to prevent bullying, or to ensure pupils' health and safety during activities outside the school. Most of the staff are qualified

First Aiders.

Pupils are very well supervised during the lunch break in the playground and to the regular visits for swimming and sports. There are excellent routines for walking to and from the site. This provides the pupils with street awareness and road safety acumen. The admission register is not up-to-date, but attendance registers are well kept and the correct information clearly recorded.

The school recognises that the buildings would prove difficult for pupils with mobility difficulties. However, the school has not yet given due regard to their obligation to complete an audit of the accessibility of the building and the curriculum for pupils with a range of disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

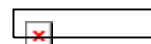
- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying, which has regard to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance (paragraph 3(2)(a));
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside school which has regard to DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and
- maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



Most members of staff are long serving and there is a good range of expertise including specialists in dance, music and ICT. Teachers are provided with many opportunities to take part in in-service training and other forms of professional development. The school has only just begun procedures for registering with the CRB, and as yet, no checks have therefore been made. Other checks, such as references, qualifications and medical questionnaires are carried out before appointments have been confirmed.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

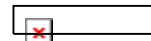
What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that, prior to the confirmation of their appointment, all staff at the school have been subject to a check with the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with

children (paragraph 4(b)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The premises consist of a Victorian school building which, since its purchase by the proprietor in 1978, has been extensively refurbished and provides an interesting and stimulating environment for teaching and learning.

The building, however, presents the school with some challenges. It occupies a very compact site and has no adjacent area where children can play outside. The school leases a playground, but this is several streets away across a busy main road. It is used at lunchtimes, and, when weather permits, for games lessons. The building was constructed with several storeys. Above the ground floor, there are three more floors, each of which is occupied by a department of the school, and access to which is by means of a stone staircase. The highest floor, which has been attractively modernised, is occupied by the children from Years 1 and 2, who therefore have to climb several flights of stairs to reach their teaching base. The school might review whether this is the best arrangement of the accommodation.

There is a basement, which houses the school's offices, a small hall and a small teaching room, but this has suffered two serious floods, which caused considerable damage. Sensibly, the school no longer uses this area as a class base. Adjacent to the hall is a tiny outside garden, to which there is no access for children. One of the retaining walls has a long crack in it and, although the wall is the responsibility of neighbours, the school has begun to investigate whether this presents a long-term hazard.

The school is well decorated and clean, and teachers make excellent and imaginative use of display and resources.

Overall, the provision of toilets and washing facilities is adequate. For younger pupils, each teaching area has its own toilets, while older children make use of a suite of toilets on the floor above their teaching room. Similarly, there is a suite of toilets in the basement which is used, as occasion demands, by older and younger pupils of both genders. In this same suite there is a designated staff toilet. The school must take steps to ensure that the toilets in the basement are clearly designated as being for boys or girls, and that more privacy is provided for the boys in this area.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

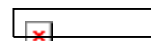
The school meets almost all the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that there are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special educational needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school does not provide all of the information to parents that it is required to. It does not provide them with particulars of its curriculum, except that it does give a summary of the Foundation Stage curriculum in the information sheet issued to parents. School policies, and other information, are available from the school office.

Parents are always welcome to discuss any aspect of their children's welfare. Reporting to parents on both personal and academic development is detailed and informative and includes suggestions on how parents can help their children at home.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

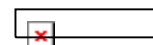
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g)).
- provide particulars of its policy relating to bullying (paragraph 6(2)(h)).

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

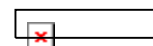


Complaints are considered fairly and objectively. The procedures are contained in the handbook for parents although a significant minority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they were not aware of them. The headteacher reports that the formal stages of the procedures have not been invoked for several years.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Dallington School		
DfES ref number:	206/6299		
Type of school:	Primary		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 88,	Girls 88,	Total 176
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 5,	Girls 4,	Total 9
Number of boarders:	Boys 1,	Girls 0,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2,085 - £6,155		
Address of school:	8 Dallington Street		
	London		
	EC1V 0BW		

E-mail address:	postmaster@dallingtonschool.co.uk
Telephone number:	020 7251 2284
Fax number:	020 7336 0972
Headteacher:	Mrs M C Hercules
Proprietor:	Mrs M C Hercules
Lead Inspector:	Dr Roy Long
Dates of inspection:	7 - 10 February 2005

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