

Dallington School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Dallington School, situated in the Clerkenwell district of the London Borough of Islington, was founded in 1978 by the current headteacher who is also the proprietor. It has a non-selective intake of boys and girls between three and 11 years of age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is divided into two units: Lower and Upper Nursery. There are currently 135 pupils on roll, of which 52 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and all of whom are in receipt of nursery funding. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. In Key Stage 1 pupils attend Lower and Upper Transition. There are two classes in this part of the school, one for each year group. In Key Stage 2, pupils transfer to the Middle school. This consists of two classes of mixed-age groups: one for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and the other for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school was last inspected in July 2008.

The school aims 'to provide a non-competitive environment; providing for each child a happy, secure and stimulating environment that promotes discovery and observation and values a love of learning.'

Evaluation of the school

Dallington School successfully meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the good curriculum, along with good teaching and learning, leads to pupils making good progress; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' exceptional behaviour and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that they become confident individuals with a real desire to engage in their own learning. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school takes satisfactory steps to ensure that pupils of all ages feel safe through its regard for their health, welfare and safety; safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The vast majority of regulations are now met; however, some of the regulations relating to elements of the complaints procedure are not met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good overall. It is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The youngest children's learning is embedded in a broad range of learning experiences closely linked to the key areas of learning for this age group. However, curriculum planning and the emphasis placed on different areas are inconsistent at times. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of the curriculum is good. It follows the guidance provided by the National Curriculum with a strong emphasis on meeting pupils' individual needs and interests and providing a purposeful context in which to learn. The school is proud of its principles of a 'spiralling curriculum' whereby pupils are encouraged to revisit, extend and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. Although some elements of mathematics and literacy are taught discretely, most of the learning takes place within a topic approach where different curriculum subjects are interlinked to make learning more meaningful. From Upper Nursery onwards pupils have the opportunity to learn from specialist teachers and experience subjects such as art, swimming, ballet, tap dance, jazz and musical theatre. Pupils enjoy the varied range of school trips that broaden their horizons.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teaching is good from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2 and results in pupils making good progress. Where teaching and assessment are at their strongest, planning clearly draws on pupils' prior achievements and the work set matches the needs of all pupils. Good questioning, strong subject knowledge and clear modelling of language ensure that pupils progress well in lessons. The use of practical resources linked to real contexts for learning ensures that pupils are keen and eager to learn. In one class pupils were applying their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) to write the school newsletter for parents and others. This involved interviewing staff and pupils, making notes and taking pictures. Pupils make outstanding progress in their social development. In music, art and tap dancing, pupils of all ages make exceptional progress as a result of strong subject knowledge and enthusiastic teaching. The many opportunities provided for pupils to engage in group work and role-play ensure that pupils become well-rounded individuals who are proud of their achievements.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning in group work; however this good practice is not always present during introductions to lessons. As a result of one-to-one discussions between adults and pupils, teacher observations and effective marking, most pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are clear about how much progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work. However, on occasions, tasks set for the more-able pupils do not always provide sufficient challenge.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage observations made by adults about children's starting points and future development needs are satisfactory. In some cases they do not provide sufficient information to support teachers in identifying children's next

steps to learning. However, in Key Stages 1 and 2 assessments are good. These assessments are supported by some testing linked to National Curriculum expectations. All assessments are recorded and help to inform teachers' future planning so that individual needs can be suitably addressed. In the Middle school pupils are also formally tested in verbal and non-verbal reasoning along with mathematics and comprehension. The school is now considering the development of a whole-school tracking document so that the progress made by different groups of pupils against assessments is clearer.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has successfully created a stimulating, caring environment in which pupils feel that they are valued as individuals. Pupils are very proud of their school and appreciate the family atmosphere. They develop into confident and articulate individuals as a result of the many opportunities to participate in school plays and class discussions. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance, outstanding behaviour and extremely positive attitudes towards learning. Regular circle time ensures that pupils can talk openly about their feelings and discuss class and whole-school issues. Consequently pupils' moral and social development is outstanding, and their spiritual development is good. They gain a satisfactory understanding of other cultures through the study of music and art from around the world and their regular contact with a school in Africa. Pupils have strong principles about the importance of respecting cultural differences, as one child said, 'We are all different and that is a good thing.'

Pupils are clear about their contributions to the school and wider community. In school they take on a range of roles from becoming 'class reps' or classroom monitors through to responsibilities for compost collection. In the wider community, pupils hold Christmas carol concerts at a local church where members of their family and local community can attend. They often choose their own charities and raise money through selling cakes. For example, pupils decided to raise money for survivors of the Haiti earthquake and Great Ormond Street Hospital. As a consequence of their outstanding social and moral development and the good acquisition of basic skills, pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their school lives.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All major policies and procedures to ensure pupils' safety are in place, including those for safeguarding and child protection and they are effectively implemented. All training, including that for child protection, is up to date. However, the school is fully aware that while risk assessments are adequate there are occasions when they are not as detailed as they could be. Also, systems for updating information have not always taken place in a

systematic or timely manner. The school is very proud of the good quality of pastoral care it provides for its pupils, including for those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures that pupils are able to work and play in a safe and secure environment. As a result, pupils feel safe in school and are happy to go to any member of staff if they need help. Pupils are very clear about the importance of staying healthy and safe, and the impact this has on their learning. As one child stated, 'If you are healthy you feel good about yourself and you have more energy to learn!' A stronger element of welfare, health and safety has been the school's positive responses to the regular fire risk assessments.

By the end of the inspection the school had a detailed plan in place to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has ensured that it meets the regulation for safer recruitment procedures and appropriate checks have been conducted on the suitability of the proprietor and staff to check their suitability to work with the children. A single central register is in place and it meets requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The staff have worked hard to turn the inside of this school into a light airy space for pupils to learn. Classrooms are warm and inviting and clearly promote pupils' achievements. The stairways have been recently refurbished so that pupils' work can be celebrated in purpose-built wall frames. The school meets all the regulations for this aspect.

Provision of information

The school's website and prospectus provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others. Regular newsletters produced by pupils in Years 5 and 6 ensure that parents and carers are kept well informed of school events. Links with parents and carers are strengthened through the Friends of Dallington who organise regular fund-raising events. In Years 5 and 6, parents and carers are offered a consultation meeting to discuss their child's preference for secondary school and teachers are available daily to talk to parents and carers at their request. In all other year groups, parents and carers are given three formal opportunities a year to discuss their child's achievements. The school is in the process of extending these formal meetings for those with pupils in Years 5 and 6. All parents and carers receive an annual school report of their child's achievements. The majority were supportive of the school, as one parent stated, 'The school engenders a real enthusiasm for learning.' However, the school leaders are also

aware that some parents and carers would appreciate more homework and a formal mechanism for expressing their views; these are currently under review.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy is referred to in the school prospectus and meets most of the regulations. However, procedures do not make clear that parents and carers are able to bring someone with them to attend a meeting of the complaints panel if one is convened or that one member of the panel is independent of the management of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

As this is a non-selective school children start Lower Nursery with varying basic skills. The current children in the Early Years Foundation Stage joined with skills broadly expected for their age except in their social development where they were better than expected. Children happily take on responsibility for small tasks and play well together sharing toys and taking turns. Their strong concentration skills and positive attitudes towards learning contribute to their good outcomes overall. In linking sounds and letters (phonics), writing and number work, many children make satisfactory progress. However, children's progress in their creative and physical development is good and outstanding in their social, personal and emotional development and spoken language. Despite this inconsistency between subjects, children make good progress overall as a result of the strong relationships they have with adults and the good teaching they receive as they move through Lower and Upper Nursery.

The quality of provision is satisfactory. Good teaching results in children making good progress in some learning areas although the level of challenge could be greater at times. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children. Very effective adult questioning and use of practical resources, songs and games result in children eager to participate in their learning. For example, in one lesson, children were observed developing their understanding of sounds and letters through making up silly sentences and rhymes with adults. Although there is no free flow from indoor learning experiences to the outside due to the nature of the building, the school plans for children to use the school's nearby playground daily. In addition children attend weekly swimming and dance lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory as it does not always provide a wide range of adult-led opportunities for children to develop their writing, phonics and number-work skills. Assessments, while satisfactory, are carried out through observations but these are often descriptive in nature rather than evaluative. Consequently planning does not always provide for children's next steps in learning and some children, such as the more able, are not sufficiently challenged at times.

The children are confident and happy as a result of appropriate transition arrangements and daily contact with parents and carers. While resources are used effectively to support children's learning and appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place, leadership and management are satisfactory because of the inconsistencies in planning and assessment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must ensure that:

where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))

the procedure allows for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 25(h)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

develop a whole school tracking document so that the progress made by different groups of pupils against assessments is easier to evaluate as pupils move through the school

ensure that teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning in the introduction to lessons.

Early Years Foundation Stage

develop leadership and management systems for ensuring that assessments are evaluative and formally contribute to teachers' planning.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2010/1997/contents/made.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	1978		
Age range of pupils	3–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 75	Girls: 60	Total: 135
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,685–£11,070		
Address of school	8 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BW		
Telephone number	020 7251 2284		
Email address	postmaster@dallingtonschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mogg Hercules		
Proprietor	Mogg Hercules		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

11 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dallington School, London EC1V 0BW



As you know, I visited your school recently with one other inspector. We would like to thank those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and everyone else who works in the school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming; you made our visit very enjoyable.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- You make good progress in your work, you feel safe and really enjoy coming to school.
- You know how to keep safe and healthy, and you enjoy the small family feel about your school.
- The school makes every effort to make your curriculum interesting and fun by teaching you through 'topics.'
- You make outstanding progress in your social development which helps you to feel confident in your learning.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. All adults know you well and take great care of you.

We have asked your school to do the following things.

- Make sure that all adults have a clearer picture about how much progress you are making as you move through the school.
- Ensure that adults help you with your learning during the introduction of lessons.
- Ensure that leaders and managers in the Early Years Foundation Stage become clearer about what you need to learn next and ensure that this is reflected in teachers' planning.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector