

De La Salle School and Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115237
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338545
Inspection dates	15–16 September 2010
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	749
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Max Collis
Headteacher	Dr Mike Curnock
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2007
School address	Ghyllgrove Basildon SS14 2LA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors. HMI spent two days reviewing all aspects of the available data prior to visiting the school. The inspection team observed 40 lessons, all taught by different staff. Professional feedback was offered to all staff who were observed teaching. Senior staff were invited to conduct a number of joint observations of teaching and learning with inspectors.

Inspectors met with nominated staff, representatives of the governing body, and groups of students in both formal and informal settings. The inspection team observed all aspects of the school's work, looked at attendance records, student progress data and reviewed all safeguarding procedures.

- HMI reviewed the 262 parental questionnaires returned. A total of 150 student and 11 staff questionnaires were evaluated. Formal feedback on the inspection outcomes was provided to members of the governing body, representatives of the Diocese of Brentwood, senior staff and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
 - safeguarding procedures
 - the rising trend in standards and achievement
 - the use of assessment for learning
 - the range of curriculum provision and the impact of the school's subject specialist status
 - the strength of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals are above the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national figure and the proportion of those whose first language is not English is half the national average.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national figure, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. There are a small number of children in the school who are looked-after by the local authority.

The school is maintained by the Lasallian Brotherhood within the Roman Catholic Church and is supported by the Diocese of Brentwood. The school has been granted language college specialist status and has received the following national accreditations: the Healthy Schools award; the International Schools award; Investors in People; and the Inclusion quality mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has made considerable progress in the last two years. Outcomes for individuals and groups are good and show a rising trend. Standards of attainment have improved and are in line with the national average. The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs in 2010 was in line with the national average for the first time in recent years. Equality of opportunity is good. Student progress has been significantly above the national average for the last two years. Similarly, those from a variety of ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Vulnerable students and those who find learning difficult make good progress.

The improvements secured in teaching in the last two years have helped raise standards and the impact of effective teaching on the quality of learning is evident in the students' current work. Teaching is good; there are no significant inadequacies in particular subjects or across year groups. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good and this is a real strength of the work of senior staff. Marking is generally satisfactory and there are examples of good practice. Where teaching was outstanding, the use of assessment to enhance learning was a positive factor; however, inconsistencies in the use of assessment remain in some lessons.

The range of curriculum opportunities provided is good; the courses introduced in 2008 have made a positive impact on standards. However, some departments offer a limited range of examinations and this hinders further improvement in standards. In 2009, the proportion of students who remained within education, employment and training was above the national figure and good partnership arrangements have been established with a local work-place learning provider.

Behaviour is outstanding; this is a reflection of the school's catholic ethos and the value placed on positive student/staff relationships by the headteacher. The school has worked hard and to considerable effect to improve attendance. The students are very enthusiastic about securing access to the 'Red Carpet' whereby those who have recorded 100% attendance during the previous week has priority in the lunch queue. Attendance figures for the last academic year were above the national average.

The care, welfare and guidance provided are good; parents and students spoke very positively about the nature of the individual support available. Many aspects of the school's pastoral work are outstanding. However, some administrative procedures associated with safeguarding activities required support from the inspection team to comply with current requirements. Academic guidance is good and a notable feature of the strongest teaching. In the last two years the school has accepted over 20 'guest' students, individuals who have been vulnerable in a variety of ways, including those who were in danger of being permanently excluded from other local schools. All have settled in

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well, attended regularly and made good academic progress: this is a testimony to the schools nurturing approach and high expectations.

Governance is good; the work of the governing body has been enhanced by the contributions of new governors. Governors and senior staff are keen to develop a sixth-form. This ambitious step is part of the senior managements drive for improved 14-19 provision and higher standards. Many students spoke warmly about the headteacher and other staff; one young man who spoke to HMI at the end of the school day summed up the view of many when he pointed to the headteacher and said, 'He's the man that makes this place tick'. Inspectors concur. The leadership team has done well to secure the improvements in standards, teaching and learning, equality of provision, behaviour and attendance; self-evaluation is good. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further refine the range of curriculum opportunities available by extending the range of courses within a subject area to raise standards
- Develop greater consistency in the assessment for learning across the school.
- Enhance the nature of the administrative arrangements that support the full range of the school's care support and guidance systems to match the quality of the pastoral care provided.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry has been well below average in recent years, although this is rising in the lower school. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved notably in the last three year. The proportion of higher grade GCSE passes secured has risen by 30%. The provisional outcomes of the 2010 examinations, as measured by the average points scored, have improved by 166 points since 2008 and are now in line with the national average. The proportion of students obtaining five higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics remains below the national average. The results secured in the school's specialist languages area continue to be above the national average.

Provisional data indicates that the variation in student progress between girls and boys has been eliminated and the achievement of students in receipt of free school meals continues to be above the national average. The progress made by those who find learning difficult is good. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds have made good progress for the lasts three years; the progress of students from a Black African or Caribbean heritage has been significantly above the national data.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirrors the improvements established in the most recent examination results. In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to this challenge. In an outstanding French lesson, tasks were very well planned to match the learning needs of less able students; questioning was skilful, resources were of high quality and learning was driven forward at a brisk pace. Enjoyment and achievement is good overall, with strengths evident in individual achievement, above average attendance and outstanding behaviour.

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Inspectors found the students and their parents to be very positive on 'feeling safe' and observed excellent staff/student relationships to support this view. A good range of healthy school meals are available; the proportion of students engaged in sport is high and the school provides effective support for a healthy lifestyle. The students' contribution to the school and wider community is good, often coordinated by the student council and well-supported by the chaplaincy. Overall, the range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being are good. Significant improvement has been secured in the students' key skills.

The student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The moral and social maturity displayed by the students was particularly impressive. The section 48 faith school inspection report, completed in July 2010, gave the same judgement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and clearly having a positive impact on standards and student progress. Outstanding teaching was observed in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history. The strengths of teaching included: very good relationships between teachers and students; skilful questioning which probed students' understanding; enthusiastic and committed delivery; good use of information technology; and strong subject knowledge. Outstanding lessons were characterised by highly skilled questioning, for example, in two Year 10 mathematics lessons which challenged and supported

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students to think in depth and drove learning forward at real pace. In some other lessons, the match of task to students' learning need lacked precision, or opportunities were missed to exploit the information technology resources available. In these lessons the use of assessment to enhance learning was underdeveloped.

The curriculum is good and has improved substantially since the last inspection. New pathways offering a range of courses were introduced in 2008 and have helped raise standards in the recent public examinations. The school's specialist status has strengthened the curriculum provision significantly, raising students' linguistic skills and cultural awareness. Senior staff are rightly considering broadening provision, for example, within subject areas such as science and religious education (RE) in pursuit of higher standards.

Care, guidance and support are good. Although many aspects of individual pastoral care are outstanding, some of the policies and administrative practices that should underpin this work have placed a limitation on this judgement. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sporting activities, after-school clubs and events such as 'Youth Gather', enhance learning and social opportunities effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior team have embedded ambition and driven improvement effectively for the last three years. The headteacher has high expectations of the effective classroom practice required; the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff are accurate and has been at the heart of much of the progress made. As a result, standards are improving and students make appropriate and often good progress towards challenging targets. Staff and the governing body go to considerable lengths to ensure equality of opportunity is good.

Governance is good with a clear focus on school improvement and ambitious plans to make the most of the 'Building Schools for the Future' funding they have recently had confirmed. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Community cohesion and engagement with parents and carers are good and are being enhanced by the work of the chaplaincy. The school's partnership work with the extended schools network and other local educational institutions is good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding and has been critical to the rise in standards and achievement. Senior staff and the governing body deploy resources effectively and the school provides good value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the inspection was above average. The overwhelming majority of parents felt their child enjoyed school and believed that De La Salle was well-led and managed. Those parents who wrote to the inspection team expressed positive support for the manner in which any bullying is dealt with and the quality of personal care provided by staff. Inspectors agree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at De La Salle School and Language College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 262 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 749 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	42	144	55	5	2	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	129	49	129	49	3	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	79	30	140	53	24	9	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	91	35	144	55	9	3	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	125	48	124	47	7	3	4	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	30	150	57	21	8	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	26	169	65	16	6	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	77	29	155	59	9	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	91	35	156	60	8	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	136	52	108	41	7	3	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	71	27	151	58	13	5	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	135	52	117	45	3	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	141	54	108	41	5	2	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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.



17 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of De La Salle School and Language College, Basildon, SS14 2LA

As you know, your school was inspected recently; the inspection team enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We were all hugely impressed by the courtesy you showed adults and other pupils, and your outstanding behaviour. De La Salle is a friendly place, you told us that staff know you very well and that you appreciate the good personal care and support you receive. You told us how pleased you are with the 'Red Carpet' and the opportunity for an early lunch that good attendance brings. It was lovely to see the good progress you are making and the effective teaching provided.

Many of you spoke warmly about the headteacher and one young man who spoke to me as he was leaving school summed up the view of many when he pointed to the headteacher and said, 'He's the man that makes this place tick' - we agree.

I know the headteacher is ambitious to improve the school further and therefore I have asked him to:

- further refine the range of curriculum opportunities available
- develop greater consistency in the assessment of your learning
- bring up to date some of the administrative arrangements used in school.

I hope I get the opportunity to visit your school on another occasion.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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