

# The De La Salle Academy

Carr Lane East, Croxteth, Liverpool, L11 4SG

**Inspection dates** 5–6 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students achieve well and attainment is rising. From their starting points, all groups of students make good progress across the academy.
- Teaching is good overall and a good proportion of teaching is outstanding. Lessons motivate students of all abilities so that their learning and progress are at least good.
- The Principal, a National Leader in Education, is a highly respected and effective leader. He clearly articulates the aspirational vision and values that are shared by the academy community.
- Leaders take effective action to improve teaching so the proportion that is outstanding is rising.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding and they have a keen desire to learn and improve. They appreciate the fact that staff know and care deeply about the students as individuals and will always go the extra mile to help them.
- The sixth form is good because it meets students' needs. They achieve well and make a positive contribution to the life of the academy and its local community.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstandingly well. As a result, students thrive in a highly inclusive learning community in which all members are equally valued.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment is below average in some key measures, for example, in the proportion of students achieving grades A to C in both mathematics and English GCSE.
- Teaching is not consistently outstanding to ensure that all students make rapid and sustained progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons and held meetings with leaders, teachers and members of the governing body.
- Discussions were held with several small groups of students, gathering the views of over 50 students in this process.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to take into account.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a number of policies and other documents, including the academy’s own data on current students’ progress, improvement plans and monitoring information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, minutes of recent governing body meetings and safeguarding arrangements.

## Inspection team

Marguerite Murphy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Mark Williams

Her Majesty’s Inspector

John Leigh

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Its specialisms are in English and Media and it is sponsored by the De La Salle Brothers, in partnership with co-sponsors the Archdiocese of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University.
- It is a boys' academy that admits girls into the sixth form provision. It uses no alternative provision for students' education.
- The vast majority of students are White British and only very few students do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, at around 60%, is very high. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to the academy based on the number of students in local authority care, from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A below average proportion of students has additional needs that are supported through school action, action plus, or a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress to raise standards and meet or exceed national averages in all key attainment measures at the end of Key Stage 4 by:
  - securing consistency in the rising proportion of students who achieve A\* to C grades at GCSE in both English and mathematics
  - ensuring that those students who are capable of reaching the highest grades A\* and A are stretched to do so through teaching that always provides sufficiently demanding work
  - reviewing and building further on the early intervention work being done to address some students' weak literacy or numeracy skills when they enter the academy
  - developing the skills of middle leaders and teachers to observe lessons and robustly evaluate students' learning and progress and how this can be improved if it is not outstanding.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the academy varies from year to year from below to well below average. In the 2012 examinations, there was a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, to above the national average.
- A well below average proportion of students achieved this with both English and mathematics included. The predicted rise in this figure was affected by the national concern about English GCSE grades, with one of the academy's key targets being missed despite the improvements made in mathematics. Nevertheless, the pass rates in English compared favourably to national figures for boys.
- Although the percentage of students making or exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics in 2012 was disappointing, this was not typical of students' overall performance. Rates of progress are rising for all groups of students and this is evident in lessons, including the smaller, targeted intervention groups for those who require additional support to reach their potential. These are also successful in ensuring that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their peers.
- In English, the gap between the performance of those supported by pupil premium and other students was a little larger than typically found in 2012. The academy's analysis of information on students' current progress shows that the gap is narrowing for those in the current Year 11 and across other year groups. It also shows that a higher proportion of students than before are now on track to achieve many of the key national attainment measures in 2013.
- The academy has an early entry policy for some GCSE examinations that is used appropriately in the students' best interests and does not limit their potential.
- Most higher-attaining students are being stretched and make good progress in lessons, although a below average number reach the highest grades A\* and A. For example, a group of students who had above average results in mathematics on entry to the academy did not achieve better than grade C in 2012. Students' self-belief and aspirations are rising, however; they expect to do well and like to challenge themselves to reach or exceed their target grades.
- Work targeted at improving literacy is helping to reduce gaps in some students' reading skills when they enter the academy. Although there are examples of individuals making rapid progress in reading and sustaining this, as a result of one-to-one adult intervention, the academy recognises that this is not yet consistent. Students' enjoyment of reading and writing across the curriculum is promoted well and they are encouraged to read more widely and regularly beyond the academy day.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress across a range of subjects at different levels to meet their needs. For some, the sixth form provides an opportunity for more study time to better their GCSE grades or complete vocational courses. An increasing number take Level 3 courses and are considering university.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Excellent relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students contribute to the very positive climate for learning that is evident in lessons. Consequently, students' learning and progress are good and sometimes outstanding.
- Lessons are typically well planned to take into account students' previous learning and their current attainment levels. Teachers use the very good knowledge and enthusiasm they have for their subjects to motivate students and build progressively on their skills. On just a few occasions, teachers' planning focuses on too many tasks with insufficient time for students to complete these and fully develop all learning opportunities.
- Teachers use questioning well. Where this is particularly strong, it is challenging and probing, to make sure students give answers in more depth and demonstrate their full understanding. The

quality of marking and other feedback to students is variable between subjects and individuals and leaders are aware of the need to review marking procedures to improve their consistency and impact on students' progress.

- Expectations are high and students make good quality contributions to their lessons. Common features of almost all lessons are students' active involvement in group tasks, in pairs or independently, collaborating with each other and assessing their own and others' work.
- On very few occasions, students' progress can be inhibited by a lack of challenge in a task or activity. Students' excellent attitudes and behaviour mean that there are few barriers to learning, so in some lessons there is room for teachers to 'push further' to achieve outstanding progress.
- Teaching styles and planned tasks are matched well to the different skills and abilities of all groups of students, and teachers often encourage a 'competitive element' where appropriate to boys' learning styles. Students also feel confident and comfortable to tell teachers if there is something they either do not understand or find particularly easy.
- The smaller class sizes and group intervention sessions allow for the promotion of personalised learning for many students. Teachers tailor individual tasks well to have the maximum impact, for instance in preparing students for examinations at their particular target grade or level.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary both in and around the academy and they feel very safe and cared for well. Students are positive and conscientious, eager to learn and are willing to work independently and collaborate with each other. They value their teachers' and each other's views and are happy to learn from one another and provide feedback from group or paired work.
- It is to the credit of the academy's leadership, staff and students themselves that the significant on-site construction work going on around them is not posing a risk to safety or learning. Students' motivation to learn and their loyalty to the academy are impressive and their behaviour personifies its mission and core values of 'faith, courage, respect, resilience and independence'.
- Students have a very good understanding of the dangers that face them in today's society and of ways in which they can keep themselves safe. They know about all different forms of bullying and feel confident that any incidents would be reported and dealt with quickly by staff.
- Good attendance is the norm for the majority of students, who appreciate the importance of this and of punctuality. The academy's procedures for monitoring these are understood by students and their parents. Exclusion is rare and used only as a last resort after careful reflection on the impact of specific events, often outside the academy itself, on the safety and learning of others. There have been no fixed term exclusions in this academic year.
- Students in the sixth form have a mature attitude to their work and personal development and agree that the academy effectively meets their needs. They are well informed about their options regarding courses, qualifications and future employment and how to get the best from the opportunities provided for them. Students are expected to take on additional roles and responsibilities and do so willingly, including voluntary work in the local community.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The Principal, vice-principal and all leaders and staff are fully committed to the academy's ambitious vision and high aspirations. This includes a clear devotion to meeting students' needs and enhancing their future life chances. It is underpinned by outstanding levels of care and support for all students, who are known well as individuals.
- Opportunities for all staff to access good professional development are seen as an important factor in the academy's mission and continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Appraisal systems are used effectively to promote continuous improvement and hold staff to account.

Leaders and governors acknowledge, however, that it is now an appropriate time to review the academy's performance management policy to ensure that teachers are always set quantifiable targets that relate to students' progress.

- Senior leaders make regular checks on the academy's progress and analyse the performance of all groups of students. Self-evaluation is accurate and development plans focus appropriately on the key priorities for improvement. Leaders are aware that improvements could be made in the use of specific and measurable success criteria by which the impact of the academy's actions can be fully checked.
  - The good curriculum has several interesting and innovative elements that enhance students' experiences and provide an excellent focus on developing their basic skills alongside personal qualities. The academy's specialisms in English and Media have a positive impact on the popularity and performance of those subjects. Students are enthused by a good range of extra-curricular activities.
  - Partnerships with the network of De La Salle schools contribute to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including sporting, cultural and exchange visits. The on-site student hotel provides for visiting students, many of these from overseas, to stay whilst they are visiting Liverpool.
  - The leadership of teaching and learning incorporates judicious use of external support and coaching that promotes teachers' skills of self-reflection and sharing best practice. The academy's lesson observation procedures, however, do not always robustly evaluate students' learning and progress and how this can be improved if it is not outstanding.
  - The academy guides and supports sixth form students successfully to access a range of opportunities from GCSE to 'A' level and vocational courses or apprenticeships.
  - Pupil premium funding is used effectively to supplement other sources of income and ensure all students have equal chances to succeed. It has contributed to the wide range of academic support and interventions that have a positive impact on students' rates of progress.
  - Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements.
  - Although there were few responses to the online Parent View survey, it is evident through discussions with students that they and their families are very happy with what the academy offers them. The positive partnership with parents includes early contact with them should students find themselves in difficulties personally or academically, so that problems can quickly be resolved.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body holds leaders to account for the academy's performance and have a good knowledge of its key strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have a wide range of valuable skills, with responsibilities allocated appropriately between committees. Their understanding of data on students' attainment and progress and their knowledge of the quality of teaching enables governors to ask appropriately challenging questions of senior leaders and teachers. Financial management and monitoring of resources are strong, and this will be an important factor in maintaining a balanced budget as student numbers fluctuate from year to year.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136409
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	399828

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	396
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	77
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brother Campbell
<b>Principal</b>	Patrick Ferguson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 546 3134
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