

De La Salle School

Mill Brow, Eccleston, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 4QH

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although attainment is above the national average, not all students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress in some subjects, particularly English.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good and outstanding. Some lessons provide insufficient challenge and pace to ensure all students actively engage in their learning and think for themselves.
- Marking does not always make it clear to students how to improve.
- Leaders do not focus sufficiently on students' progress when setting targets to improve, which are not always high enough to raise achievement. The monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough.
- Senior leaders do not always provide the governing body with information on how the school's work is specifically making a difference to students' progress. As a result, the school is not achieving as well as it should do for some students.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring and supportive school where important values underpin all that it does. Relationships are excellent.
- Students feel safe. They are polite and courteous and generally have a very positive attitude to their school and their learning.
- There is some outstanding teaching, notably in the performing arts and mathematics.
- Attendance rates are high and consistently above national averages for all students. Exclusions are few as a result of an effective referral unit within the school.
- The resourced provision for students with special educational needs is purposefully integrated into school. These students are well supported and often make very good progress.
- The curriculum and wider opportunities provided offer a good range of opportunities that contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders, including governors, have a good awareness of what changes need to be made and their actions are beginning to show improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 part-lessons taught by 47 different teachers. Five observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and heads of subject departments. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information and work showing students' progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed by parents in the 73 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as individual letters and emails sent directly to the inspection team.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- De La Salle School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a designated centre for specialist autistic support. Provision for these students is an integrated part of the wider school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does make a limited use of alternative provision with St Helen's College and two independent providers, Aspire and Blackburn Rovers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is at least good and increase the proportion of outstanding lessons to improve the progress of all students, particularly boys, those eligible for free school meals and in English, by:
 - ensuring all teachers having consistently high expectations, knowing what good and outstanding teaching looks like
 - creating more opportunities for students to play a more active part in their lessons and take more responsibility for their own learning
 - making sure that marking of students' work, especially in writing, is consistent, giving precise information on what they need to improve and providing opportunities for students to respond to the teacher's comments.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - making sure that the monitoring of the quality of teaching is always rigorous enough so that weaker aspects are eradicated
 - focusing more on information about students' progress and to check their targets are high enough to ensure they make as much progress as possible
 - ensuring that governors have specific information to measure success of actions and to check on students' progress in order to hold school leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work and ensure changes are rapid enough.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some students are not making fast enough progress, particularly in English, from their individual starting points.
- Students enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are higher than average. The school has a large proportion of middle and most-able students.
- Over the last three years, including the school's unvalidated 2013 results, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to C including English and mathematics has varied from 68% in 2011 to 63% in 2012 and down to 61% in 2013. While GCSE passes are slightly above the national average, some students, based on their ability, have not made fast enough progress. This is particularly so in English and for some boys.
- The grades and levels of improvement expected of students have not always been challenging enough. Changes, including the students' target-setting processes, are starting to provide students with more challenging targets for each subject. As a result, information on current students shows that attainment is rising and the progress of current Year 11 students and for the different student groups is improving. Similar improvements across student groups can be seen in other years especially the current Year 8.
- Teachers encourage reading across the curriculum and students generally read well in all subjects and are confident in presenting to the rest of the group. However, some students need to participate more in the lessons. Students' progress in writing is not always fast enough as they do not receive specific feedback linked to their work to enable them to move on quickly to the next step.
- The proportion of most-able students making very good progress is above the national average and especially high in mathematics. These students do especially well because teachers have high expectations and students are fully challenged.
- In 2013, students supported by pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals achieved approximately one GCSE grade lower than all other students in English and mathematics. However, the school's information on the current Year 11 shows that those students are currently two-thirds of a GCSE grade lower. This shows that they are making expected progress and the gaps are closing albeit not quickly enough.
- From their starting points, students achieve particularly well in art, biology, dance, design and technology, French, mathematics, physical education and physics.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they are making similar progress and sometimes better progress to that made by other students, particularly in English.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by a statement, including those who are part of the resourced provision, make particularly good progress because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants, demonstrating the school's values of promoting equality and opportunity for all.
- Early entry in English and mathematics is used selectively to optimise students' achievements at GCSE grade C and above.
- The relatively few students following courses in other establishments away from the school site receive good support and achieve well.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough lessons are good or better and there is a small minority of inadequate teaching.
- Lessons do not always take into account the full range of abilities, and expectations are not always high enough. Too often, all students are provided with the same work and teachers do not plan sufficiently for the progress of all students. As a result, some students are not challenged enough.
- Written feedback to students is inconsistent. It is very effective when students are given clear steps on how to improve their work and are also given the opportunity to reflect and respond to the teacher's comments, taking responsibility for their learning. This practice is not yet consistent across all lessons.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to work by themselves or in groups, developing the necessary skills for learning without too much direction from the teacher.
- In the best lessons, such as mathematics, where sometimes outstanding teaching was seen, teachers have high expectations. These lessons are very well organised and teachers make clear to students what they are going to learn. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to encourage students to think for themselves and develop their understanding. In these lessons students are keen to learn and make good progress.
- In some lessons observed, there were very good opportunities for students to discuss and to positively challenge the views of others. This promoted excellent speaking and communication skills.
- The good relationships between students and teachers and between students themselves promote positive attitudes to learning and enable students to get on with their work well.
- Lessons observed in the performing arts captivated students and had high levels of engagement. All students contributed and were appropriately challenged to achieve their very best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students have a very positive attitude; they are polite and well-mannered and demonstrate a great deal of respect to all those involved in the school. The values of the school are evident in the way that students behave to adults and each other.
- Students report that they feel very safe in school because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults. They have a genuine pride in their school and value the support they receive from staff at all levels. They have a good awareness about all types of bullying and understand how to keep themselves safe, supported by clear programmes such as those for e-safety.
- Attendance continues to be a strength in the school and is above the national average for all groups. Punctuality to lessons is excellent.
- Exclusions are well below the national average and the school has not permanently excluded any student in the past 10 years. This reflects the school's strong inclusive ethos and the support and guidance that it provides for all students.
- The school's internal referral units are effective in preventing exclusions, although further action is required for a small numbers of students to ensure that they develop consistently positive attitudes to their learning.
- In some lessons, students are not actively engaged in their learning and fail to recognise that their progress will improve if they participated more.
- Students have a very good awareness of their social responsibility and their place in the world. This was particularly evident in an assembly that was observed on the conflict in Syria, some reflections in form time on the anniversary of the 9/11 attack and the vast range of charity work that students become involved in.
- The large majority of parents responding to Parent View agree that behaviour is well managed.

A small minority of staff, particularly support staff, responding to the questionnaire do not think that behaviour reported is always dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because changes have not been rapid enough to improve students' progress. However, actions implemented over recent months are more effective and demonstrate capacity to improve.
- Not all leaders systematically evaluate the impact of all aspects of the school's work on students' progress. Middle leadership is improving although the sharing of good practice is not yet fully established.
- Joint lesson observations undertaken during the inspection indicate senior leaders' judgements of teaching are generally accurate. However, the way leaders usually judge the quality of teaching is often too generous and weaker aspects in teaching are not resolved. Teachers do not share the best teaching seen in school.
- Progress of students is monitored but does not always take sufficient account of the overall progress that students make from their starting point. Students' targets are not always high enough.
- Teachers have professional targets as part of the school's performance management process. These are not always closely linked to the progress pupils make. Training is regular and supportive although it does not always relate to the school's priorities.
- Improvement plans identify the correct priorities but do not include sufficient measurable outcomes and this makes it difficult to assess that changes are being fully effective. Nevertheless, in practice current changes are starting to increase progress.
- Leaders of the resourced provision and for those students with a disability or special educational needs have established clear and rigorous mechanisms for ensuring that students receive appropriate and sensitive support, enabling them to progress and develop themselves as independent learners.
- The local authority is aware of the improvements required in the school and is now ensuring that leaders will have additional support from excellent practice outside of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - While the governing body clearly knows what the areas for improvement are, it does not challenge leaders sufficiently on what is actually making a difference to the progress of students, especially those students who are eligible for free school meals.
 - All governors have a clear role in monitoring the work of the school. Sub-committees are in place so governors understand about the quality of teaching and play a role in performance management of staff, they check on data but not enough to be effective.
 - Governors are clearly committed to the success of the school. They ensure statutory requirements are met including safeguarding. They would benefit from some external support to review how information is presented to them and how they can fully understand the progress of all students in relation to their starting points.

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

Unique reference number	104834
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	426267

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	1195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Case
Headteacher	Mr Will Daunt
Date of previous school inspection	03 December 2008
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