

De Lisle Catholic Academy

Loughborough Leicestershire

Thorpe Hill, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 4SQ

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well by Year 11, not only because they are taught well but also because they show good attitudes to school and learning.
- The school has proved successful in enabling those students who qualify for additional government funding to make good progress.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form, and the study programme for students aged 16 to 19, are good, as is the achievement of students in both Years 12 and 13.
- The school makes sure that students receive the individual guidance they need to make informed decisions about their future lives.
- The school and its sixth form are led and managed well; there is clear planning for improvement and close monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The headteacher, staff, governors and students share mutually high expectations; they strive well to support each other, so that all within the school community have good opportunity to learn and teach well.
- There is a strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.
- Teachers and students develop positive and productive working relationships.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding, particularly in ensuring consistent planning for all groups of students and in its approach to the marking of students' day-to-day work.
- The school's increasingly successful approach to the development of students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills is not yet embedded fully across all departments.
- The skilled questions teachers ask individuals and small groups of students to extend their learning are not yet a consistently effective feature in whole-class activities.
- Some less-experienced subject and other leaders are still developing the skills necessary to contribute fully to the monitoring of the school's work, including teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons and 43 teachers were seen. Ten of these lessons were observed jointly with members of the school’s senior leadership team.
- Daily tutor time and ‘Learning for Life’ lessons were seen. In addition, inspectors undertook ‘learning walks’ around the academy to observe its life and students at work. The inspection team looked at samples of students’ work. They heard a sample of students from Years 7 and 9 read.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with groups of students selected by the lead inspector. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of academy documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, information provided for families (including the academy’s website), and governing body and academy trust documents. The school’s data and assessment records for the tracking of the students’ progress were scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, the head of the sixth form, heads of department and pastoral leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, class teachers, administrative staff, members of the governing body and representatives of the academy trust.
- The 141 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View were taken into consideration, as was the content of written communications sent to the lead inspector during the inspection. The 290 returns to the academy’s own recent ‘Ofsted style’ surveys of parents were also examined. The 39 responses to the questionnaire for academy staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector
Judith Long	Additional Inspector
Patrick Cook	Additional Inspector
Susan Tabberer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- De Lisle Catholic Academy converted to become an academy on 1 July 2012. When its predecessor school, De Lisle Catholic School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The school is part of The Blessed Cyprian Tansi Catholic Academy Trust (Leicestershire), which also includes five Catholic primary voluntary academies within the Leicestershire authority: the Holy Cross School, Whitwick; the Sacred Heart Catholic Voluntary Academy, Loughborough; St Clare's Primary School, Coalville; St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Loughborough; St Winefride's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Shepshed.
- De Lisle is a larger than average-sized secondary school. Parents choose to send their children to the school from across the whole of North Leicestershire, and in some cases from neighbouring counties. Students join the academy from over 40 different primary schools.
- Most students come from White British and Other White heritage backgrounds. A few come from various other heritage groups, mainly from mixed or Asian and Asian British backgrounds.
- Most students speak English as their first language. There are currently very few students at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is also below average.
- A few students in Key Stage 4 receive alternative provision for vocational courses and other training at Loughborough College, Twenty Twenty Loughborough, and at Burbage and Hinckley Independent Learning Centre. Such courses include: childcare, catering, hair and beauty, motor vehicle maintenance, engineering and construction.
- The headteacher is the chair of the Diocesan Secondary Head Teachers' Association.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding and improve further students' achievement by ensuring that:
 - the marking of students' day-to-day work is completed routinely, to the good standard seen in the marking of test and examination work, and which reinforces the helpful oral advice teachers give to students to improve their work
 - teachers use their good questioning skills more consistently in whole-class situations to assess learning and encourage students to think increasingly deeply about their learning
 - lesson planning accounts for and matches more closely the different needs and learning styles of all groups and abilities of students in a class or set, including the most able
 - the qualities, example and approach set by the best teaching is shared systematically in a structured and focused way.

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the academy, and the monitoring of teaching and students' progress, by helping the school's less-experienced subject and other leaders to:
 - develop fully the skills they need to support senior leaders in checking the academy's work and raising students' achievement further
 - promote the academy's current initiatives to ensure wider opportunities for boosting students' literacy and numeracy skills within all subjects taught across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are significantly above average. By the end of Year 11, they gain above-average standards in national examinations. Students make good progress between Years 7 and 11, and this continues into the sixth form.
- This is not a school which is resting on its laurels. Its improvement planning and the close tracking of students' progress ensure a central focus on enabling all students to have equal opportunity for success and help the school to avoid any discrimination. This is driving well leaders' ambition to enable a higher proportion of students to reach outstanding levels of achievement by the time they leave the school.
- In summer 2013, at the end of its first year as an academy, students' attainment in GCSE examinations was above average overall. It was above average in English, mathematics and core science. In most subjects, the proportion of students gaining A* to C passes was better than the national average. The proportion gaining higher A* and A passes was slightly above average; this included a number of individual students who gained between six and 12 A* grades.
- In 2013, around a third of the students took combinations of courses which qualified for the English Baccalaureate. The proportion gaining A* to C grades was above average. It was above average in English, science, languages and humanities, and well above in mathematics.
- In 2013, all students were entered for mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 10. While this proved successful, with most students gaining an A* to C pass, and a quarter gaining A or A* grades, there were a few students at both ends of the grade spectrum whom the school has recognised as being disadvantaged by this policy. From this year, entry will only be in Year 11.
- The school is building well on the opportunities for its students in Key Stage 3 to achieve success. In 2013, the proportion of Year 9 students gaining the expected Level 5 and higher Level 6 or better were both above average in English, mathematics and science. Such standards not only reflect the school's success in its first year as new academy, but also provide a positive level of challenge as it looks to create a longer-term track record of high standards.
- In the sixth form, data show that overall examination results in both Years 12 and 13 in 2013 were above average. At AS Level, Year 12 students gained on average nearly half a grade better than students nationally. This is providing them with a firm foundation on which to build this year. Year 13 students gained just over a quarter of a grade better than is seen nationally. This enabled almost all students applying for university to gain their first or second choice places. This reflects well not only on the students' own ambitions but also on the ways they are prepared for the next stage of education or work when they leave the sixth form.
- Not only does the school help its more-able students to achieve good success, but it also enables those who may be disadvantaged, or find difficulty with their learning, to achieve well. It focuses effectively on initiatives to help such students make good progress. As a result of additional 'catch-up' funding, current Year 7 students who did not make the progress expected of them by the end of Year 6 have made, on average, twice the amount of progress expected in both English and mathematics.
- By summer 2013, Year 11 students eligible for the pupil premium were a term behind their classmates in English, but a term ahead of similar students nationally. In mathematics, they were over three terms behind their classmates, but in line with all students nationally. Data show

this represents good improvement since the school became an academy and reflects the good progress these students are making.

- The few students from the various minority ethnic heritage groups, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress overall, including most of the very few for whom English is a new language. In 2013, the proportion of such Year 11 students making expected progress was higher than those whose native language is English.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs does vary more, depending on their needs and particular circumstances. However, they are set suitably challenging targets, and their progress towards these is mainly good. Discussions with staff show that the school is now exploring more deeply how lesson planning can enable more specific support for such students, along with additional challenge for the more able.
- While almost all students take traditional academic subjects, a few in Key Stage 4 have alternative provision and study vocational courses with other education providers. The work and personal development of such students is monitored closely to ensure they make good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Students in both the main school and in the sixth form say they value their teachers because staff listen to them, help them to develop an affirmative outlook on life, and often see teaching more as a vocation than simply work. This encourages students to become positive in their thinking and approach to learning. This was an aspect of the teaching which sixth form students found to be of particular value to them.
- The quality of teaching is good, including in English and mathematics and in the sixth form. Similar features of teaching are found across the school, from Years 7 to 13. Almost all teachers have a good understanding of their students, and the different ways they approach learning. Teachers' use of questioning, with individuals and small groups, is often of very good quality in probing students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers also monitor regularly their students' progress through the school's new and efficient monitoring system. This is helping the school to set increasingly challenging individual targets for students from Years 7 to 13.
- The marking of end-of-unit work, essays, course tests and assessments is almost invariably thorough across all year groups, including in the sixth form. Such marking plays an important part in helping students to know how to improve. Discussions with students also show that they benefit well from the oral advice given by teachers during lessons and subject-related, extra-curricular activities. Students say that they appreciate the extra time teachers often give to help and advise them.
- Excellent teaching and learning were seen in a Year 10 physical education lesson exploring how football may provide a model as an elite sport, through promoting maximum levels of performance and control. Students responded very positively to the demands of the lesson because of outstanding planning and clear directions and assessment of their progress. The learning was enhanced further by a clear focus on respect for others while playing the game.
- However, across the school, teachers are not consistent in the ways they plan their lessons or the actual range of tasks set to meet the needs of the different groups of students in their classes. This includes providing that extra edge of challenge for the more-able students.
- Students' day-to-day work in exercise books and work folders, and students' notes in the sixth

form, are often not monitored or marked consistently regularly. This does not support students in the longer term when their memory of the teacher's spoken advice and guidance may have faded. Where the checking of such work and student notes consists mainly of ticks, this does not give students any guidance as to how to improve their work.

- Sometimes whole-class questioning tends to be superficial, and does not deepen or challenge students' understanding as fully as it should. On occasions, and even in the sixth form, some teaching misses opportunities to question students and encourage them to review their own learning rather than the teacher summarising for them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Given the very wide geographical area, and large number of primary schools, from which it draws its students, the school is a remarkably cohesive community. Students are welcoming, courteous and well mannered. Discussions with them show they enjoy school; their attendance is above average.
- Retention rates in the sixth form are good, and students persevere with their courses because they receive good advice and guidance to enable them to choose their post-16 study programmes well. Students across the school learn enthusiastically, collaboratively, often creatively, and respect each other.
- Examples of good and outstanding attitudes, thoughtful learning and reflective discussion were seen throughout the school. This was evident in a Year 8 humanities lesson, where students built an informed interpretation of the often appalling conditions for sailors on both sides during The Spanish Armada. It was also seen in a Year 13 applied science debate as to whether some invasive brain surgery may potentially take away from our human rights. Students have a well-developed sense of 'fairness', and an ability to appreciate and weigh both sides of an argument.
- The students admit that they are not always 'angels', especially in their early time at the school when they are getting used to 'the De Lisle way'. They point to some students who do find it difficult to manage and control their own behaviour, and know that there have had to be a few temporary exclusions. However, the need for this has reduced significantly over the past year.
- Students are open and show mature attitudes and thoughtful approaches when talking about the occasional incidents of anti-social behaviour. However, they are adamant that bullying, racism and homophobia are not issues for them at the school. As one student said, 'We can't imagine feeling unsafe in school because of the strong community atmosphere.'
- The students' appreciation of the frailty of human nature says much about the high quality of their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A number of students said they felt staff sometimes gave students 'too many chances', but balanced this very carefully with their appreciation that the school never gives up on them and perseveres with them.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, at all levels, make important differences to students' lives. The school's lay chaplain also plays an important role in supporting and guiding students. The good progress students have made in the four terms since the school became an academy reflects good teamwork amongst the staff and a good capacity for further improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and focused well on moving it from good to outstanding.

- Shared lesson observations show that the headteacher and senior leadership team evaluate accurately the quality of teaching and learning. Some heads of department and other leaders are relatively new to their posts, and are still developing the skills necessary to play their part fully in the wider monitoring of teaching, of students' progress and of the school's general performance. Nevertheless, they are demonstrating an increasing impact on raising students' achievement.
- The sixth form, including the 16 to 19 study programme, is led and managed well by an assistant headteacher, who deals mainly with the academic side, and a head of sixth form, who caters more for the students' personal development and pastoral needs. This combination works and supports the students well.
- Good support is provided for students to advise and guide them on personal and academic matters. Students speak positively about this and the confidence they have in staff and other agencies to help and guide them. In the sixth form, this has proved particularly helpful regarding university applications and the success rates students achieve in this. Students value life in the sixth form and they feel they are being prepared well for university or work.
- Discussions with students from Years 10 to 13 confirm that the range of subjects and courses provided meet well their individual needs and aspirations. Most enjoy the challenge offered by the courses and the teaching. There is also a good range of lunchtime and after-school activities with a varied programme for each day of the week. Sport is particularly popular, and the physical education department has built well on the 2012 Olympic heritage, for example by expanding its programme to include handball and additional opportunities for swimming.
- As an academy, the school chooses not to have any one specific adviser, but uses a number of independent consultants to review and evaluate its work. Discussions with the headteacher and heads of department show the school gains good value for money from this approach.
- Recent reviews of both English and mathematics are having a wide impact in the ways the school is looking to develop, improve and integrate the teaching of literacy, numeracy and communications skills more effectively across all departments. Discussions with staff show they are open to the sharing of good practice and new ideas, but the sharing of teaching skills across departments has not always been sufficiently systematic.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and members of the board of directors contribute substantially to the school, both personally and professionally; they use their skills and expertise well. They challenge and support the school effectively. The governing body knows how the school is performing in relation to others nationally, and works closely with staff to promote continued improvement. The governing body, and board, place a clear priority on ensuring the school's legal requirements are met, including those for safeguarding. Governors undertake regular training, and are well informed about their roles and responsibilities. They monitor spending closely and check that pupil premium funding has a good impact on the achievement of eligible students. Such monies are being used well not only on additional, specialist staffing and resources to provide extra tuition but also to ensure no students are disadvantaged. The board has ensured there are clear guidelines for staff as to how salaries are linked to students' progress, teaching quality and National Teaching Standards.

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	138298
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	425062

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1295
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body – and board of directors
Chair	Terry Murphy – and Katherine Cohoon
Headteacher	Chris Davies
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01509 268739
Fax number	01509 233643
Email address	enquiries@delisle.leics.sch.uk

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