

De La Salle School and Language College

Ghyllgrove, Basildon, SS14 2LA

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in a wide range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Students make strong progress in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is good across both key stages.
- Students behave extremely well and their attitudes to learning are extremely positive.
- The effective leadership of the headteacher and his senior team has created a positive ethos shared by staff and students alike.
- A relentless focus on the quality of teaching by leaders and governors has ensured that achievement is improving.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Over time students do not experience enough outstanding teaching, including consistency in marking and the setting of homework.
- Fixed-term exclusions are not declining quickly enough.
- Achievement in geography, drama and textiles is not as good as in other departments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons. Tutorial sessions were also observed.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The views of 42 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire were analysed and taken into account. Inspectors considered 166 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, as well as one letter and one telephone call from parents.
- Inspectors analysed the most recent public examination results for the school. They scrutinised the school's current assessment data, the school development plan, students' work, minutes of meetings and policies, safeguarding documentation and the school's most recent self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors met with senior, subject and other leaders, teachers, students from all year groups, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Christine Ockendon	Additional Inspector
Gerard Batty	Additional Inspector
Evelyn Riley	Additional Inspector

Paul Lawrence is appointed as an Additional Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Full report

Information about this school

- De La Salle School and Language College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at around 28%, is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, at approximately 32%, is higher than the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school currently uses alternative provision to educate a very small proportion of its students through Essex County Council's Children's Support Services, Basildon.
- The headteacher, along with other staff and governors, currently provide support for St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Basildon.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in the school and raise achievement by
 - improving written feedback on students' work so it provides clear guidance to students about how they can improve their work
 - ensuring that homework consistently enhances learning.
- Improve leadership and management further by
 - strengthening the effectiveness of department leadership in less successful subject areas
 - adopting strategies to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The caring and determined leadership of the headteacher and his senior team has created a strong, positive ethos which is shared and valued by all members of the school community. Leaders effectively fulfil the school's stated aspiration 'to foster high expectations and to provide the means for these to be fulfilled'. The effectiveness of senior leadership is recognised overwhelmingly by students, parents and staff alike.
- School leaders establish and regularly communicate clear expectations about the conduct of students. These are applied consistently throughout the school and this results in the students' positive attitudes to their learning and good behaviour. This in turn supports effective teaching and learning.
- Self-evaluation at the school is perceptive and thorough. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be prioritised for improvement. This knowledge informs clear development plans which are constructed at a whole-school and subject department level. These are clearly focused on improving outcomes for students.
- School leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is robust. They are aware where teaching in the school is most effective and where further support and training needs to be put in place. They have acted decisively to deal with any inadequate teaching. Performance management has been used effectively to challenge underperformance.
- The school provides clear and informative school reports to parents. These include a wealth of information about the targets students should be working towards alongside information about current performance. They help parents develop a clear understanding of how their children are progressing.
- School leaders have worked successfully to prepare students for life in modern Britain. Students demonstrate a clear interest in learning about the society around them. All students in Key Stage 4 take GCSE religious education which ensures that they are taught about different cultures and religions and encourages them to reflect upon important ethical issues. This strengthens the school's positive work to promote equality and tackle discrimination and also helps students to appreciate and respect the diversity of life in modern British society.
- Subject and other leaders are well supported by senior leaders. The school has recently established systems which encourage new subject leaders to learn effectively from more experienced colleagues. This is to allow examples of good practice in teaching and learning to be shared across different departments more effectively and to remove the remaining inconsistencies in quality.
- High-quality advice and guidance is provided whenever students are considering future course or career choices. During Year 9, students are offered appropriate guidance about the Key Stage 4 courses available. The school arranges alternative placements for a very small number of students who could benefit from a wider curriculum experience than can be provided on the school site. During Year 11 students are well guided and, as a result, the vast majority make a successful transition to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively, particularly by helping to review standards and by providing training and expertise to help further improve teaching and achievement. The school has also benefited from its own involvement in supporting other schools, most notably its partnership with a local partner primary school, because this has required teachers to reflect on their own practice and helped broaden their experience.
- The school has extended the breadth and balance of the academic and vocational learning opportunities available to students, although the range of courses available in science is still too limited. Students participate in a varied extra-curricular programme.
- In recent years, school leaders have successfully provided focused challenge and support to improve

achievement in some subject departments. However, this has not yet had sufficient impact on achievement in geography, drama or textiles.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are fully committed to the school and undertake their responsibilities rigorously. They fulfil their duties effectively, including ensuring that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and overseeing the performance management of the headteacher.
- Governors actively seek out and undertake relevant training opportunities. New governors are provided with a thorough induction programme.
- Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the school and are determined to support further improvement. They ensure that the school performance management process rewards good teaching and challenges underperformance. They apply their knowledge of the school to contribute effectively to the school's strategic planning.
- Governors are familiar with available sources of information about the school's performance. They use these to help monitor the performance of student groups, such as those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs. Governors do ask challenging questions of the school's leadership, but they have not always recorded this sufficiently in the written records of their meetings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students conduct themselves in an orderly fashion when moving around the site at all times of the school day. They are usually polite, courteous and helpful to staff and each other. The school's 'no shouting' rule is scrupulously adhered to by students and staff alike, and this helps establish the calm atmosphere. Only occasionally are there incidents where students do not comply with the school's high expectations for behaviour.
- Students look smart in their uniforms and follow the school's uniform policy impeccably. They drop very little litter and look after the school site with great care. They arrive promptly to lessons and invariably have the right equipment. There is a shared expectation that learning will start quickly and that students will work hard.
- The atmosphere in lessons is purposeful and productive and students are focused and industrious. They contribute eagerly to class discussions. Students are usually focused and industrious and they will contribute eagerly to class discussions when it is appropriate. The attitudes of students to their learning are highly positive and this has a strong impact on their progress as they want to take advantage of every opportunity to learn.
- Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Students arrive at the school punctually and many stay after school to participate in additional learning activities.
- Fixed-term exclusions are declining, but remain above the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school undertakes its obligations for safeguarding, for example in recruitment, with appropriate thoroughness. The school liaises closely with alternative providers to ensure that students who are educated off-site because of medical or other individual needs attend this provision and are safe.
- Students say that they feel safe at school and almost all parents believe that their children are safe and well cared for. The school provides high quality pastoral care and students understand which adults they should go to if they have a problem or concern.

- Students develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe in different situations and are taught effectively about the risks associated with computers and mobile phones. Incidents of racial or homophobic bullying are extremely rare and well documented by the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Effective teaching has a positive impact on learning in English, mathematics and across the wider curriculum and students make good progress as a result.
- Teachers create positive, trusting relationships and they ensure their classrooms are constructive learning environments. Students listen attentively to teachers' explanations and feel safe to answer questions even when they might risk making mistakes.
- Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons which build coherently upon what students already know and can do. In English and mathematics, for example, teachers rigorously assess what students already understand through regular, focused testing, address any misconceptions which arise and then build systematically upon these foundations.
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. This means that in most subjects students expect to receive tasks which stretch them. Individual targets for attainment which embody a high level of challenge are routinely shared with students and are used effectively to motivate them.
- Students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills are developed effectively across the curriculum. Students read widely, for example during identified times in tutorial sessions.
- Teaching assistants work well to support the learning of disabled students and those who have special educational needs in many lessons. The work teachers plan for these students is carefully tailored to their individual needs and they make good progress as a result.
- The school has introduced innovative ways of using new technologies to enhance teaching and learning. All students in Key Stage 3 have their own tablet computer and this has allowed many students to develop valuable research skills to support their learning. However, not all teachers are exploiting these resources as consistently or effectively as they could.
- The school's marking policy is not consistently followed by some teachers. While most marking in books provides encouraging feedback to students and identifies improvements needed in spelling and presentation, it does not always provide advice that clearly tells students how to improve. Some teachers do not always check that students have acted on the feedback that is given.
- Teachers do not always plan homework which effectively builds upon or embeds what students have learned in lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with standards that are well below those expected of their age. They make strong progress and finish Key Stage 4 with standards of attainment which are in line with national averages.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics was higher than the national average in 2014. The rate of progress students make across the school overall is high when compared to other schools nationally.
- Achievement in both English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 is strong. Effective teaching in both

subjects ensures that students learn well and the proportions of students who achieve and exceed nationally expected levels of progress are well above average.

- Students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills are also regularly reinforced in other subject areas. Students broaden and deepen their mastery of important knowledge and skills across a range of subjects throughout their time at school and this enables almost every student to move confidently and successfully onto the next stage of their education or employment.
- The school's thoroughly planned provision to support the learning of students with disabilities or special educational needs results in them making good progress. The small number of students who are educated off-site also achieve well.
- The most able students make good progress. The school provides opportunities for these students to pursue challenging additional courses, such as the Level 3 algebra course studied during mathematics lessons.
- Students sit GCSEs in core science and statistics at the end of Year 10 and in English Language before the end of Year 11. Their results in 2014 demonstrate that the attainment of these students, including that of the most able, was not restricted by this strategy of early entry.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students, for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, and the attainment of other students nationally and in the school is being successfully narrowed. In 2014 the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students in the school and other students nationally amounted to around half a grade in both mathematics and in English and the gap between their attainment and other students in the school amounted to two thirds of a grade in English and three quarters of a grade in mathematics.
- Not all subject departments achieve as well as the most effective. Achievement in geography, drama and textiles remains notably below that in other subject areas.

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	115237
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	449409
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	743
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Collis
Headteacher	Mike Curnock
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
Telephone number	01268 281234
Fax number	01268 288710
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