

De La Salle School

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

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Over time the proportion of students who leave the school with five high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics has been consistently below expectations given their starting points.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics has been significantly below average for the last two years. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged students and those of middle ability.
- The most-able students are not achieving as well as they might.
- In many lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low; consequently, activities are not challenging enough, particularly for middle-ability students and the most able.
- A minority of Key Stage 4 students are following courses that are limiting their options when they leave the school.
- Students' attitudes to learning are inconsistent. They can become disengaged from their learning when teaching fails to capture their imagination and encourage their curiosity.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is inconsistent and too often is not of sufficient quality to accelerate students' progress.
- Homework is not being used effectively to reinforce students' learning away from school and give them opportunities to apply what they have learned.
- Leaders and managers have an over-generous view of how well the school is doing. Consequently, they have not addressed with sufficient urgency all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, and as a result students are continuing to underachieve.
- The pupil premium has not been used effectively to close attainment gaps in English and mathematics between disadvantaged students and their peers.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching, over time, in performing and visual arts, physical education and religious education is strong.
- Effective support and monitoring are provided for students with special educational needs and for those attending off-site provision.
- The school's work to keep students safe is good.
- The school's use of the Year 7 catch-up premium is effective.
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, preparing students effectively to become valued citizens in modern Britain.
- Under the leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, governors are taking increasingly effective steps to hold senior leaders to account for students' outcomes and the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence in coming to their conclusions about the overall effectiveness of the school. They observed teaching in most subjects and by many different teachers. Five lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited morning registration and one school assembly.
- The school held GCSE mock examinations during the two days of the inspection; consequently no Year 11 teaching and learning was observed.
- Meetings were held with a range of professionals, including the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of teachers with responsibility for leading and managing a range of subjects and a group of classroom teachers.
- Inspectors met with some governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and with groups of students of different ages. An inspector also held a meeting with members of the school’s chaplaincy team, the school’s librarian and the careers coordinator.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- The work in students’ books was scrutinised, as were school policies. Senior leaders’ analysis of how well the school is doing was examined along with the school’s most up-to-date improvement plan.
- One inspector examined the school’s attendance data, behaviour log and the record of the checks made on behalf of the governing body on the suitability of adults to work with children.
- The inspection team considered the 92 responses of parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View), the 64 responses to the staff questionnaire and emails, letters and other communications sent directly to the inspection team by parents.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Stephen Doyle	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Denis Oliver	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average – sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is below the national average, but is on a rising trend. The pupil premium is additional funding made available to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school receives additional funding through the pupil catch-up premium to provide extra help for those students who did not reach Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading or mathematics.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs or who are disabled, supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action is well-below average.
- The school has a designated unit for students with an autistic spectrum condition; students who are members of this unit are fully integrated into the life and work of the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school makes use of seven alternative providers for a small number of students. These are: Aspire; the Blackburn Rovers Football Academy; the local authority's pupil referral units for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students; Achievement Sports; Instant Training and the home tuition service for pupils with medical needs.
- Since the previous inspection a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and a business, finance and data manager joined the senior leadership team at the start of the autumn term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what their students can achieve are high enough and based upon an accurate understanding of students' starting points
 - making sure that all students, in particular the disadvantaged and most able, are sufficiently challenged in lessons so that they have to think hard about their work and so deepen their understanding
 - ensuring that senior leaders maximise opportunities to drive up standards of teaching including sharing with their colleagues the good practice that already exists in the school
 - making sure that the marking of students' work is effective so that students are clear about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve, and that teachers ensure that students act on this advice.
- Improve attainment and progress, particularly at GCSE, in English and mathematics and especially for disadvantaged students, those of middle ability and the most able by:
 - ensuring that the data collected by senior leaders on students' performance are accurate, reliable and used to inform the extra help students need to keep them on track to meet challenging targets.
- Improve students' attitudes to learning by:
 - maximising opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning, including making sure that teachers set appropriate homework, so that students' reliance on their teachers is lessened and they develop the skills to learn effectively across the curriculum.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that the monitoring and evaluation of how well the school is doing leads to decisive and rapid action to drive up standards
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan has a clear order of priorities, with appropriate timescales to enable staff and governors to identify which are the most important tasks that need to be done first in order to have the greatest and most rapid impact on students' outcomes
 - ensuring that careers advice and guidance provides students with precise information about the possible long-term impact of their subject option choices at Key Stage 4.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders have not tackled the areas for improvement identified at the school's previous inspection with sufficient alacrity. Consequently, the school has made slow progress and many of the concerns raised at the previous inspection remain.
- Senior leaders' actions to secure better quality teaching and learning in order to improve students' attainment and progress have had limited impact. As a result, students, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, continue to underachieve.
- Senior leaders' evaluations of how well the school is doing are too generous. For example, their evaluation of students' progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4 takes little account of national benchmarks. Consequently, any improvement in students' results is seen as an end in itself, even though such improvements are insufficient to elevate the school's performance from significantly below the national average. This lack of rigour in senior leaders' assessment of the school's performance is reflected in the school improvement plan where targets for improvement are not in a clear order of priority. Consequently, staff are not clear which improvement priorities are the most important and need to be done first so that they bring about the most rapid improvements in students' outcomes.
- Teachers with middle leadership responsibility have received training to equip them to monitor and evaluate the work of their colleagues, including making judgements about the quality of teaching. However, the impact of this training on raising standards of classroom practice and improving students' outcomes has yet to be realised.
- The curriculum is mainly academic in nature, with a wide range of subjects offered for accreditation at GCSE. The school also offers a number of vocational options. The curriculum is broad and able to meet the needs and aspirations of most students.
- Careers advice and guidance, starting in Year 9, provides students with information about subject choices at Key Stage 4 and further education, training and employment opportunities when they leave the school. Nevertheless, given their starting points, too few students are following GCSE courses in science and modern foreign languages. Consequently, the school's expressed aim of tackling discrimination and fostering equality of opportunities is being stymied by the inconsistent achievement of a number of groups of students and by some students choosing to follow courses that limit their options post-16.
- Over time, senior leaders have placed too much emphasis on students attaining threshold measures at GCSE, including the proportions achieving five higher grades including English and mathematics. This has lowered expectations for students' progress, particularly those of middle ability and the most able.
- Measures for checking students' attainment and progress have brought much-needed focus to management systems for monitoring students' performance. However, teachers' assessments are not subject to independent, external validation to ensure their reliability. Senior leaders are aware of the need to build in these checks.
- Senior leaders have tightened up teachers' performance management; this is now being used to hold teachers to account for their classroom practice, the results achieved by their students and to inform decisions about pay.
- Senior leaders have in place rigorous systems for monitoring students' attendance, behaviour and progress when they attend off-site provision. A senior leader makes regular visits to these providers, to ensure that provision is appropriate and that the students are safe.
- The school's provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong; based upon the school's principles of faith, community and service. A number of retreats give students time for reflection and links with schools both in Britain and abroad give students opportunities to meet and work with others from diverse backgrounds. The study of different faith traditions, the school's work to support a range of charities, and students' involvement in the democratic process through the school council, prepare them well to take their place as productive citizens in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders have engaged the services of a number of external consultants and have received support from the local authority. In spite of this input, the rate of change has been too slow and actions taken to improve students' outcomes have yet to demonstrate the required impact.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to improving the school and, under the leadership of the current Chair of the Governing Body, have reorganised the way they work, including inviting stakeholders on to the governing body with specific skills sets in order to share responsibilities and improve efficiency. In the past, governors were over-reliant on the headteacher and his colleagues for information about the

school's performance and as a result were ill-equipped to hold senior leaders to account for students' outcomes and the impact of their work to improve the school. As a result of training brokered by the local authority, governors are now much more confident about their roles. Governors collect information about the school's performance, first-hand, for example visiting the school regularly and meeting with students. Furthermore, members of staff with subject responsibility have made presentations to the governing body on their areas of responsibility. All these strategies are contributing to increasing governing body effectiveness. However, governors are under no illusions that many of these strategies are relatively new and it is too early to measure their impact.

- Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school and where the most pressing areas for improvement lie. They are clear that, in the past, the school has placed too much emphasis on headline examination results at the expense of students' progress. Consequently, they have supported senior leaders in making a shift in school's culture so that the totality of students' achievement is given due prominence. Governors are aware that much work still needs to be done to see the impact of this change in culture on working practices and ultimately students' outcomes.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used and are aware that thus far it has had limited impact in closing gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers. Consequently, they have supported recent changes to the way this funding is directed, but it is too early to gauge the long-term impact of these changes on outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- The pay policy committee keeps a close eye on how pay rises are awarded and makes sure that increases in salary are directly related to teachers' performance. Furthermore, this committee has supported the implementation of targeted training to improve classroom practice. However, this training package was introduced only at the start of the autumn term and governors are yet to see demonstrable impact.
- Governors ensure that the school's systems for keeping students safe meet statutory requirements and that procedures for child protection referrals are rigorously followed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- In lessons where the teaching is less inspiring, students disengage from their learning and as a result their progress slows. In a few lessons, this disengagement can be manifested in students' off-task talk, which impacts negatively on their concentration and learning.
- Evidence of the work in students' books shows that attitudes to learning are inconsistent. In the best examples, work is completed to a high standard. However, in some books work is incomplete, homework when it has been set has not been done and students have failed to improve their work when directed to do so by their teachers.
- Calm behaviour around the school, including at breaks, lunchtimes and as students travel between lessons, indicates that students and staff subscribe to the school's principles of respect and concern for each other. Relationships between staff and students, and students and their peers, are generally cordial and good-natured.
- Students' movement around the building is orderly and, as a result, punctuality to lessons is good and lessons start with little loss of time.
- Students take pride in their appearance and wear their uniforms tidily. They demonstrate respect for the school environment as evidenced by a school site that is free of litter and graffiti.
- The school's records show that students behave appropriately when attending off-site alternative provision and their behaviour is well-managed.
- Just over half of respondents to Parent View expressed the view that students are well-behaved.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Procedures for making sure that students are safe, both in school and when they attend off-site provision, are robust.
- Child protection is managed effectively, with comprehensive systems in place to manage referrals and evidence of rigorous action taken when any student is deemed to be at risk.
- The management of students' attendance has improved considerably since the previous inspection and has resulted in rates of attendance which are above national averages.

- Students are supervised well at breaks and lunchtimes. Staff are positioned at strategic points and are highly visible in yellow jackets which contribute to students feeling secure.
- Students who met with inspectors said that bullying was not an issue at De La Salle but, should it happen, they said it would be dealt with effectively. The school's log recording incidents of bullying supports the students' views with evidence of rapid and effective action being taken when bullying does occur.
- The school's team of trained student 'listeners' provides an effective means of peer support for students experiencing relationship difficulties or feeling vulnerable.
- Students' knowledge of the different forms that bullying can take is developed through assemblies. Students who spoke with inspectors were able to define what constitutes cyber-bullying and the action that teachers take should anyone use homophobic language. Such behaviour is not tolerated at De La Salle.
- The checks carried out on behalf of governors on the suitability of staff to work with children meet statutory requirements.
- Most of the parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children feel safe in school and the large majority feel that their children are looked after well. Inspection evidence supports parents' opinions.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- In too many lessons, teachers do not pay enough attention to planning activities that meet the needs of the students they are teaching. All too frequently, students are given the same work to do and many of these activities lack appropriate challenge. As a result, students make insufficient progress. This is particularly the case for the most-able students.
- In a number of lessons, teachers' questioning is under-developed and fails to challenge students sufficiently to think hard about what they are doing and so deepen their understanding. Opportunities to check on students' understanding through skilful questioning are also missed and, as a result, students' misconceptions are not identified quickly enough nor dealt with in a timely manner.
- The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers are engaged in learning conversations with their students, which impact positively on students' progress. However, too much marking is not of this quality. Inspectors saw examples of books that had not been marked up-to-date and, where work had been marked, the marking was often unhelpful.
- The scrutiny of pupils' work revealed that over time, in a range of subjects, for example in English and mathematics, students are making insufficient gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, students' application of literacy and numeracy skills, across the range of subjects, is inconsistent and slows their progress.
- There are inconsistencies in the setting, quantity and degree of challenge homework presents to students, both within and between subject departments. In the best examples, homework is set regularly, with students encouraged to complete higher level work which has a positive impact on their progress. However, there are examples of homework tasks that are not challenging enough, particularly for the most-able and, as a result, have little impact on extending their learning.
- Inspectors observed students make rapid progress in lessons where teachers had high expectations. In these lessons teachers trust students to be architects of their own learning and take responsibility for the activities they have been given to do. Where learning is most effective, teachers use questioning effectively to make students think about their work and help them make sense of their learning over time. Examples of effective learning such as this were observed in performing arts, physical education and religious education. In these lessons, students' oracy was also effectively developed through well-planned opportunities for speaking and listening. Mechanisms to share this good practice between teachers are, as yet, under-developed.
- The teaching of reading has been effective in improving the reading skills of those students who started Key Stage 3 below the expected Level 4 in this subject.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the school with levels of capability that are significantly above average. Given these starting points, the proportions of students who leave the school with five high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics is well below expectations and has been for the last three years. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers on this measure is wider than found nationally and has remained so for the past two years.

- Students' progress in English improved slightly in 2014; however, as was the case in 2013, the progress of the large majority of groups remained significantly below average.
- A change in the school's early entry policy meant that few students were entered early for GCSE mathematics in 2014, with almost all students sitting the examination for the first time at the end of Key Stage 4. However, this change had little impact on students' achievement in this subject, with the large majority of groups making significantly below average progress.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers widened at GCSE between 2013 and 2014 in mathematics and English. As a result, this group of students left the school over one grade lower in each subject than their peers in the school and other students nationally. In both cases this gap increased from what it was the previous year.
- In 2014, irrespective of their starting points, all groups of disadvantaged students made below-expected progress in mathematics and those of middle and low ability made below-expected progress in English, when compared to other students across the country. Pupil premium spending has not been effective in addressing the underperformance of these students in both subjects.
- The progress made by the most-able students, at the end of Key Stage 4, has been in decline for the past three years. Further, the proportion of the most-able students achieving the English Baccalaureate has been significantly below the national average for the last two years.
- Observations of teaching and the work in students' books indicate that students of middle ability and the most-able are underachieving in a range of subjects.
- The school's data for Key Stage 3 are inconsistent. Only one subject, computing, is demonstrating that students are making expected progress in each year group, with students' progress in English and mathematics being below expectations in Years 8 and 9. Although the data show that the progress being made by disadvantaged students is improving, compared to the previous year, it is still below the school's expectations in a number of subjects, including mathematics. However, these data need to be treated with caution as teachers' assessments have not been subject to rigorous external validation.
- As a result of good quality teaching in religious studies, performing arts and physical education, students make good progress and achieve well in these subjects.
- The school has made effective use of the additional funding that it receives through the catch-up premium to improve the reading skills of students in Year 7. The school's data show that the group of students supported by this funding made accelerated progress in this aspect of literacy during the previous academic year.
- Disabled students, students with special educational needs, those students who are members of the school's designated unit and those attending off-site provision receive effective support from a range of professionals and, as a result, achieve well.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe their child is taught well and making good progress; however a minority are less positive about these two aspects of the school.

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	454755

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	Phil Topping
Headteacher	Will Daunt
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2013
Telephone number	01744 20511
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