

De La Salle School

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

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is consistently good.
- There is too much variability in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, many teachers do not provide pupils with work that challenges them to make rapid progress.
- Middle leaders are beginning to drive significant improvements as a result of better training. However, they have not had sufficient time to improve teaching in their areas to become routinely good.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils with low prior attainment are supported effectively across the curriculum.
- Leaders' use of Year 7 catch-up funding is not helping pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in primary school to make accelerated progress in English and/or mathematics.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 have not made good progress due to a legacy of weak teaching. The progress made by boys and disadvantaged pupils still lags behind others.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of pupil premium spending on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils effectively.
- Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, too many disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school.

The school has the following strengths

- Current leaders have created a culture of openness and community. They have prioritised improvements in the right areas and have increased accountability at all levels.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is honest, accurate and precise.
- Governors have been instrumental in securing effective arrangements for leadership.
- Despite having several different headteachers since the previous inspection, the current leadership team have driven significant and far-reaching improvement across the school over the last 12 months.
- The leadership and management of behaviour is strong. Pupils' behaviour has improved and is now good. Pupils are exceptionally polite and incidents of low-level misbehaviour are rare.
- Arrangements for pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Pupils feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils throughout the school are now making faster progress as a result of improved teaching and excellent assessment.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to become consistently good by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - teachers routinely provide pupils with work that challenges them to make rapid progress from their different starting points
 - teachers and other adults provide careful support to pupils with low prior attainment to ensure that they make progress that is as fast as others.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on pupil outcomes by ensuring that:
 - every effort is made to accelerate the progress of pupils currently in Year 11 to compensate for a legacy of weak teaching
 - the school's efforts to speed up the amount of progress of made by boys is extended further
 - improvements to middle leadership are consolidated so that subject leaders have the skills to improve the consistency of teaching in their areas
 - Year 7 catch-up funding is deployed effectively to accelerate the progress of pupils with low prior attainment in English and/or mathematics when they join the school.
- Continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by:
 - reducing the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school
 - carefully measuring the impact of pupil premium spending to ensure that leaders prioritise actions that have a track record of success.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a period of turbulence and uncertainty that has been exacerbated by regular changes to how the school has been run. However, the school has enjoyed increasing stability over the past 12 months. During this time, leaders have made improvements to behaviour, teaching and outcomes that are now firmly embedded.
- Despite this, leadership and management are not yet good because the quality of teaching is still too variable; improvements to pupils' achievement are not consistent throughout the school; improvements at middle leadership still require consolidation, especially as many middle leaders are new in post; and the pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium are not used effectively.
- Although outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving, leaders and governors are aware that differences in the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are not diminishing quickly enough. Leaders have a clear understanding of the potential barriers to achievement faced by disadvantaged pupils and they take actions that are designed to tackle these possible obstacles. However, leaders do not routinely evaluate the impact of these strategies. Consequently, leaders' current spending of the pupil premium is not discerning because spending is not informed by an evaluation of how successful different actions have been in the past.
- Leaders have not had a significant impact on improving teaching for low-ability pupils. This has been compounded by weak use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, which has only resulted in a small proportion of eligible pupils making rapid progress in English and/or mathematics.
- Leaders are aware that performance management has not been used well. Targets for teachers' performance have been insufficiently ambitious and have not always aimed to address pressing school priorities. A large number of teachers have recently joined the school and this has reduced the school's reliance on supply teachers.
- Leaders regularly monitor standards in their areas. However, their monitoring is not consistently rigorous. As a result, teaching has improved at different rates across the curriculum. For example, teaching in technology has been improved at a very slow pace.
- Those responsible for leadership over the last 12 months have been resolute in their commitment to drive sustained improvements across the school. The acting headteacher galvanised the school community and led with tenacity and tact. Members of staff have responded positively to leaders' high expectations and the clarity of purpose that now characterises the school's work. Staff morale is high and the school has become increasingly outward-facing.
- The new headteacher has worked in tandem with the previous acting headteacher to ensure that self-evaluation is frank, honest and demonstrates a clear understanding of where further improvements are needed. Together, they have formulated broad, ambitious and precise plans to improve the school further.
- Middle leaders have benefited from training that is carefully matched to their

developmental needs. They understand the strengths and weaknesses in their respective areas. Middle leaders are well supported by senior colleagues. As a result, they are driving improvements within their departments with increased efficiency. Despite this, improvements to middle leadership require consolidation, particularly as many middle leaders are new to their roles.

- Leaders have established a vibrant environment for developing teaching. All staff are involved in 'progress working parties' with colleagues from other departments to develop different aspects of teaching, such as engaging boys and accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have also ensured that teachers in all subjects work closely with colleagues from other schools to share ideas, particularly in relation to assessment. These developments have been pivotal in bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is having a positive impact. There is some high-quality support for pupils, particularly those who are based in the school's provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. However, in some cases the impact of this work is diluted by the variable quality of teaching across the curriculum.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have a clear rationale for condensing key stage 3 into two years and a great deal of work has been undertaken to ensure that this arrangement does not compromise the breadth of pupils' learning. Pupils access a good balance of subjects in key stage 4, including creative and traditional academic options. Leaders are currently reviewing the effectiveness of the curriculum and have rightly identified that the curriculum requires modifying for pupils with low prior attainment.
- Pupils appreciate the range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. Leaders presented information that indicates that opportunities for enrichment are well attended. Furthermore, leaders have employed strategies to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported to ensure that they can participate fully in extra-curricular activities, including overseas visits to Italy and the First World War battlefields.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are a strength. The school's Catholic values are tangible throughout the school and pupils can confidently articulate what those values mean to them. Pupils undertake a great deal of worthwhile work for charity, such as collecting food for homeless people and 'operation shoe box', which involves pupils sending Christmas presents to children who are less fortunate.
- Leaders ensure that they actively promote fundamental British values. For example, pupils' understanding of the importance of democracy has been reinforced through activities such as a mock general election. Furthermore, pupils greatly value the improved discipline throughout the school, which has increased their appreciation of the rule of law.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked effectively with the local authority and the archdiocese of Liverpool to secure strong and stable leadership for the school. This work has

underpinned the rapid improvements that are now being made.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of the demands that lie ahead and are under no illusion about the further developments that are required to ensure that every pupil receives a good education.
- Governors have worked in tandem with school leaders to manage the school's budget carefully. As a result, the school's finances are now in a far healthier position.
- Governors have challenged leaders effectively to improve many aspects of the school's work. For example, the 'departmental progress boards' have increased the level of scrutiny on subject leaders; this increased accountability has supported rapid improvements to the quality of teaching, pupil outcomes and the accuracy of assessment in almost all areas of the curriculum. Despite this, governors are aware that the quality of teaching remains variable in most subjects and they are determined to develop subject leaders further so they can reduce the variability of teaching in their areas.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding that is now firmly established. Robust procedures are in place for child protection and there is a simple system for staff to report concerns about a pupil.
- Staff receive suitable training that makes sure they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They understand clearly what they have to do if they have concerns about the conduct of a colleague. They also understand the safeguarding concerns that are prevalent in the local community. They monitor pupils' welfare closely and information from case studies shows that leaders often go the extra mile to secure extra help from beyond the school for pupils who may need it.
- Leaders work effectively with parents and have cultivated supportive relationships with families that are vulnerable. The vast majority of parents feel that their child is safe and that bullying is dealt with effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is not consistently good across the school. The quality of teaching varies too much across, and within, different subject areas.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Consequently, work is not routinely pitched at a level that challenges pupils to make rapid progress. Although this is improving quickly for the most able pupils, middle-ability pupils are often not challenged sufficiently.
- Adults' expectations of what low-ability pupils can achieve varies significantly. Where these pupils are set demanding work, they do not always receive the support and guidance needed to make rapid gains in their learning. Not all teaching assistants support pupils to develop the quality of their work and the depth of their

understanding; instead, their efforts focus primarily on ensuring that pupils' behaviour is compliant and does not distract others.

- Where teaching is challenging and expectations are high, pupils make good progress. Strong subject knowledge and effective questioning deepen pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge. Teachers respond to pupils' misconceptions skilfully and they reshape questions and explanations to maximise pupils' progress.
- Where teaching is weaker, expectations are low and teachers lack the confidence to take risks and deviate from their original planning. As a result, teachers do not cater effectively for the different aptitudes and abilities of pupils in their classes.
- The proportion of lessons taught by temporary members of staff has had a detrimental impact on the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Leaders have recruited a large number of new teachers for the current academic year and this has dramatically reduced the school's reliance on temporary staff. Despite this, the proportion of temporary staff in science remains high because the school has struggled to recruit experienced staff in this area.
- The relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. Pupils are keen to do well and they appreciate the improvements that have been made to teaching. Where teaching is weaker, pupils usually continue to behave well and positive relationships with teachers are maintained.
- The strongest feature of teaching is the quality of assessment across the curriculum. Subject leaders have ensured that assessment is rigorous, robust and is used as a catalyst to accelerate rates of progress. As a result of improved assessment, teachers understand precisely what pupils can and cannot do and they are increasingly using this information to inform their future planning. The strongest improvements to assessment have been made in mathematics, English, science and art.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders make sure that pupils are cared for exceptionally well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to be a successful learner. Pupils are committed to arriving punctually to lessons, with their full equipment and homework complete on time. As a result, no learning time is wasted.
- Staff cater well for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. The majority of parents are very positive about the care that their children receive while at school.
- The safety of pupils who are educated in alternative provision is monitored closely by leaders.
- Pupils are respectful of others' ideas and views. The school is an inclusive and outward-looking community. Diversity is celebrated within school, particularly in relation to different religions and cultures.
- Strong links with global, national and local charities encourage pupils to help others

and develop a sense of social responsibility.

- Pupils say that bullying is rare at the school. Pupils know whom to speak to if they encounter bullying and they are confident that members of staff will resolve any issues effectively.
- Pupils say that the use of derogatory and prejudicial language is very rare at the school because of the work done by the school to promote respect and understanding.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's work to keep them safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and are aware of how to manage risk outside school. For example, pupils have found information they have been given on alcohol, drugs and healthy relationships to be particularly useful.
- Effective careers information and guidance is provided for pupils from Year 7 onwards. Pupils receive excellent guidance to help them choose their GCSE subjects during Year 8. The school also facilitates a number of opportunities for pupils to learn about different post-16 pathways. The vast majority of Year 11 pupils already have clear plans for their future. Almost all pupils advance to appropriate destinations and those responsible for careers within the school go to great lengths to ensure that pupils who have recently left the school are engaged in education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because pupils have responded positively to leaders' increasingly high expectations. Leaders have prioritised the development of pupil behaviour and pupils are grateful for the improvements that have been made.
- Pupil behaviour in the vast majority of observed lessons was positive and focused. In the small minority of lessons where low-level misbehaviour was evident, teachers managed this effectively using the school's systems.
- Pupils are sensible, mature and courteous outside of lessons and when moving around the site.
- Pupils are now proud of their school. They wear the uniform with pride and interact with adults and their peers in a friendly and engaging manner.
- The rate of pupil exclusion is reducing following a sharp increase when leaders heightened their expectations of pupils' conduct. The school uses its 'Pupil Achievement Centre' as an effective alternative to fixed-term exclusion. As a result of these measures, there are now very few incidents of serious misbehaviour in school.
- Pupils' attendance has dropped slightly since the previous inspection, but is still in line with the national average. Leaders recognise that too many disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school. Furthermore, they are acutely aware that this has had a negative impact on the progress made by these pupils in the past.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The performance of Year 11 pupils in public examinations since the previous inspection has been inadequate. Although levels of attainment have generally been in line with national averages, the amount of progress made by pupils in mathematics has been

too low. In addition, boys and disadvantaged pupils have made inadequate progress across the curriculum.

- The school's own data indicates that pupils currently in Year 11 are making better progress. However, leaders acknowledge that there are still too many pupils in Year 11, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, who are not making fast enough progress to compensate for a legacy of weak teaching.
- Observations of progress in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and current assessment data show that pupils are now making faster progress. Pupils in key stage 3 are making the fastest progress because they are less affected by a legacy of underachievement.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is mixed. In key stage 3, differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are rapidly diminishing. However, differences in Years 10 and 11 remain stubbornly wide. A similar pattern is evident with boys' achievement, as boys lower down the school are making noticeably quicker progress than those in Years 10 and 11.
- In mathematics, progress has improved. This is due to strong leadership, improved teaching and careful assessment which is used to inform lesson-planning. Similarly, improved progress in science has been consolidated with improved teaching and the introduction of an effective assessment regime.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils have continued to make good progress in history, religious studies, physical education and photography. Progress in art and design has remained an established strength of the school and teachers in this area are adept at facilitating the development of pupils' artistic talents.
- Pupils have made increasingly fast progress in English since the previous inspection. These improvements have been underpinned by high expectations, improved teaching and sharp assessment practices.
- The most able pupils are making fast progress throughout the school because improvements to teaching have been strongest for this group.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress, particularly in key stage 3. Their progress is regularly reviewed and appropriate interventions are put in place. Despite this, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties is hampered by the absence of an appropriate curriculum pathway and weaker teaching for pupils with low prior attainment.
- Pupils based in the school's autism spectrum disorder unit make impressive progress from their individual starting points. This is due to the highly personalised support these pupils receive, the inclusive ethos of the school, and the construction of individual curriculum pathways that interest and challenge these pupils to do their best.
- Almost all pupils continue to further education, employment or training when they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	104834
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10035645

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Sims
Headteacher	Andrew Rannard
Telephone number	01744 20511
Website	www.delasalle.st-helens.sch.uk
Email address	delasalle@sthelens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than average.
- The percentage of pupils who are from an ethnic minority group or who speak English as an additional language is much lower than is seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The school has a specialist unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at 'Encouragement Through Sport', 'Instant Training' and 'MPH Training'.
- Since the last full inspection, the school has had a number of different headteachers. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2017.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11. The school does not meet the government's definition of a coasting school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects in different year groups. Some observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons, assemblies and other activities.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils read.
- Inspectors met with pupils to listen to their views, both formally and informally.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority and from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that included: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in assemblies, in lessons, during form periods and at the end of the school day. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at samples of their books, jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 157 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as comments received via Ofsted's free-text service. Inspectors also took into account the 38 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the three responses to a questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kath Harris	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector

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