



De Lisle Catholic Science College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120304
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280790
Inspection dates 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005
Reporting inspector David Biltcliffe RISP

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Thorpe Hill
School category	Voluntary aided		Loughborough
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Leicestershire LE11 4SQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01509 268739
Number on roll	1277	Fax number	01509 268739
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Frank Fay

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 10 October 2005 - 11 October 2005	Inspection number 280790
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school has almost 1,300 pupils on roll and is a little larger than the typical secondary school. Of the 206 students in the sixth form, three fifths are girls. About 90% of the pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining minority come from a small range of different ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is typically above average. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. About 10% of pupils (a proportion that is below the national average) have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Pupils' overall social and economic background is above average. This is reflected in the low proportion of pupils eligible to receive free school meals.

The school gained specialist Science College status in 2003 – a change that has underpinned a major improvement in science education in the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

De Lisle is a good school. It has several outstanding features and just a few weaknesses. The vast majority of parents and pupils rightly feel that the school provides a good standard of education and meets their expectations.

The school's greatest strengths are in the provision made for science, outstanding teaching and learning in the sixth form, the highly effective care and welfare of pupils and the good leadership of the headteacher. Its weaknesses are mainly in aspects of English and mathematics, in the lack of challenge in some of the work set for pupils and in the school's limited systems for evaluating its overall academic effectiveness.

Teaching is good overall and this has led to a rise in standards and an acceleration of pupils' progress. Most pupils are keen to learn. Currently, the majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily to the end of Year 11 and reach above average standards. The introduction of greater challenge in pupils' work is a key area for improvement in order to maximise achievement.

The school is a very welcoming, safe place in which relationships are relaxed, warm and respectful. The school's Catholic ethos is central to its work: this shows itself in the quality of care for pupils and the high emphasis on their spiritual and moral growth. The school is a fine place for young people to learn and grow up in.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is a good, incisive leader and manager. Senior managers are highly committed to the school's goals. Subject and pastoral managers give an effective lead to other staff.

The school has improved effectively since its last inspection in 2000. Management is sharper and its evaluation of performance is improving. There is a good capacity to make further improvement in main school standards. On its low funding, the school gives good value for money in Years 7-11 and outstanding value in the sixth form.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

These aspects of the sixth form are outstanding. The overall standard in Advanced-level GCE courses is well above average. Most students achieve well overall and some do very well. In 2005, the vast majority of students made particularly good progress in English, mathematics, biology, drama, French, history, psychology and sociology. A few students did not make adequate progress in chemistry and geography. The outstanding quality of teaching and students' very good efforts are the major reasons for the successes. The sixth form is well led and managed. Departmental leadership, high calibre teaching and the rigorous annual reviews undertaken by the headteacher are the key reasons for the sixth form's outstanding effectiveness. The one area for improvement concerns the limited range of cultural and work related experiences provided for students. Three quarters of the students who completed A-level courses in 2005 went into higher education. Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards in English and mathematics in Years 7-11 to the level seen in science
- ensure that pupils of high ability are sufficiently challenged in their work
- improve the minority of teaching that does not require enough of pupils
- sharpen the systems used to assess academic achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school believes that pupils make good progress and achieve well during their time in school. This is a slightly rosier picture than the evidence indicates for Years 7-11: the need for further improvement in English and mathematics in particular keeps achievement just below the 'good' rating at 'satisfactory'. The school did not quite reach the reasonable academic targets it set for itself in 2005. The school is alert to the weaknesses in progress and is implementing effectively a programme of positive change.

Inspectors judge that pupils' overall academic progress and achievement during these years are satisfactory, but on a clearly rising trend due to the current good quality of teaching. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Sixth form achievement, as noted earlier, is outstanding.

Pupils' standard of literacy is a little above average. Most pupils are confident readers and fluent speakers. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. So, too, do the very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

In GCSE examinations, results are above average. Pupils tended to do best in 2004 in science, geography, French and physical education. They tended to do worse in English, mathematics, art and history. The proportion of top A* grades gained in English and mathematics in 2004 was low.

The school's GCSE performance was stronger in 2005 than in 2004 as a result of the school's well planned improvement efforts and better teaching. For example, mathematics improved significantly and, across subjects, the two top grades were up by 50%. In science, three out of every 10 pupils gained the top A* or A grades, showing what can be achieved (particularly for the most able pupils).

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

A strong Catholic ethos underpins pupils' good personal development. The school's outstanding spiritual ethos and its strong moral, social and cultural provision have created a safe, caring and happy learning community. Parents value highly what the school stands for.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Their attitude to work is very positive. Occasionally, a small number of pupils behave in an immature way and slow down lessons for the rest. Generally, however, pupils show considerable respect for one another and for their teachers. They work with enthusiasm. They are very courteous. When presented with demanding work, they rise willingly to the challenge. Movement between lessons, at breaks and at lunchtime, is sensible and orderly.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their attendance and punctuality are good. The School Council provides many opportunities for pupils to discuss issues which directly concern them. In contrast, there are few opportunities for students in Years 12 and 13 to take responsibility within the school or for pupils to be actively involved in the wider community. The school does not give enough prominence to work related skills in the curriculum.

A healthy lifestyle is actively promoted. Drinking water is available at all times. The lunch menus feature a wide range of healthy choices. However, many pupils and students in Years 10-13 who may leave the school at lunchtime buy food off site. As a result, the school is not able to influence what they choose to eat. It works hard, with modest success, to discourage smoking. Overall, the school is a strong, nurturing community.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are outstanding in the sixth form. Of the core subjects, science teaching is particularly good and a beacon example of improved teaching and accelerating achievement. It is stronger than the teaching of English or mathematics. Inspectors' judgements agree very closely with those of the school.

In the best lessons, teaching builds rapidly on pupils' strong desire to learn. Teachers explain new work clearly, yet concisely. They check swiftly and probingly that all pupils understand their tasks. Pupils readily take charge of their own learning. All pupils contribute confidently and perceptively to discussions – such as in a Year 11 English lesson on relationships in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Importantly, teachers keep the intellectual level of questions and debate consistently high. In these strong lessons, pupils listen to one another carefully and respond thoughtfully.

No inadequate lessons were observed. In a significant minority of otherwise satisfactory lessons, however, pupils did not learn as much as they should have done, because the teacher did not demand enough of the class. In a small proportion of lessons, the teacher did not effectively stop pupils chattering or ensure that they remained hard at work until the very end of the lesson. Such features limit pupils' achievements.

Sixth form students are highly motivated. They are very well aware of the requirements of examinations and work hard to meet these. They enjoy learning, inspired in many lessons by their teachers' infectious love of their subjects – as, for example, in design and technology, where students experimented adventurously with drawing techniques.

Pupils' learning needs are usually met well. In mixed attainment classes, however, there is not always enough challenge for all: high ability pupils in particular sometimes mark time. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support from a team of skilled, enthusiastic teachers and learning assistants.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors judge the curriculum to be satisfactory overall in meeting the needs and aptitudes of pupils in Years 7-11, a lower judgement than the school's rating of 'good'. Not enough time is given to learning about citizenship, for example, with the result that pupils do not reach the standards they should in this subject. As a science college, the school has added vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but agrees that the overall vocational element remains light.

The school rightly believes that it provides a good range of A-level courses in the sixth form, forming a curriculum that meets local needs well. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurial or life skills.

The school justifiably takes pride in its wide range of extra-curricular activities. All pupils have, for example, regular opportunities to take part in 'retreats'. The house system ensures a high rate of participation in sports. The school does not, however, record in which activities pupils participate and so cannot evaluate fully the contribution this important aspect of its work makes to their education.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school regards these parts of its work as outstanding. Inspectors judge them as good overall: some aspects of the school's provision are indeed outstanding, but the evaluation of pupils' achievement in English and mathematics (in particular) requires improvement.

Both parents and pupils value highly the outstanding, caring ethos of the school that derives directly from its principles as a Catholic foundation. The required procedures for health and safety and for child protection are in place. Provision for careers guidance is very good. Parents and pupils feel that, through the school's help, a wise choice of courses is made at the end of Years 9 and 11. The taught programme of personal, social and health education and provision for citizenship require further improvement.

Tutors take their personal guidance role seriously. The regular monitoring of pupils' progress in Years 10-13 is good, helping the school to pinpoint and remedy weaknesses adequately. In contrast, the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in Years 7-9 are insufficiently systematic and rigorous. Consequently, though its academic guidance is satisfactory, reviews of academic performance (and many reports to parents) lack sufficient precision.

The school justifiably prides itself on the high quality personal support and guidance that pupils receive. The full-time lay chaplain and school nurse, for example, offer complementary, highly valued support both to individuals and to the school as a whole. Overall, the school can be proud of the fine young people it turns out.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher is highly committed, incisive and effective. The senior leadership team works corporately and effectively. They have been successful, for example, in ensuring that science is a strength of the school and that mathematics is now firmly improving. Strategic planning, the monitoring of teaching and the management skills of heads of departments all show improvement. Weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been tackled effectively.

As a result of these initiatives, departmental leaders continue, steadily but surely, to improve the academic achievement of pupils in Years 7-11. Most evaluation of performance is satisfactory, although some is a little optimistic. The school has rightly identified its main priorities for improvement.

The outstanding academic work of the sixth form testifies to good overall leadership and management. The aspects of high attainment, achievement and teaching at A-level are founded on strong departmental work. The absence of a clear, overall vision – including enrichment activities – for the sixth form indicates one element of leadership that is no more than satisfactory.

Links with parents and external agencies are very good. Electronic technology, such as regular email contact with four fifths of parents, is imaginatively used. The school puts great value on all pupils as individuals.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school. They have a good grasp of the school's financial situation and manage the budget efficiently. Their links with departments provide a strong visible presence around school. They do not, however, have enough information to challenge the school thoroughly. The deployment of available resources is highly effective.

The continued improvements in teaching, achievement, departmental management and whole school planning indicate a good capacity for future improvement.

Grade: 2

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 October 2005

Dear Pupils and Sixth Formers

This is a brief letter to you all. We wish, first, to thank you for the very pleasant way you received us. We were impressed by your courtesy and by the mature way that you explained your views to us. Second, it is to tell you what we think about your school.

Overall, we think that De Lisle is a good school. Some of its work is outstanding. There are also a few aspects that need to be improved.

These are what we consider to be the main strengths of your school. We hope that you enjoy reading them and keep working to make your school even better:

Results in science are very good: you are very well taught and make good progress.

The school shows great care and concern for your welfare and progress.

Academic achievement is outstanding in the sixth form.

You are very pleasant, well mannered young people. You work hard and are a credit to yourselves, your parents and your teachers.

The school uses the limited money it has very well for your benefit.

There are a few things that need to be better. Please think carefully about them and play your part in making your school even better:

Some of you can achieve more in English and mathematics.

Some of your work needs to challenge you more and make you try harder.

The school needs to assess everyone's progress even more carefully.

A small minority of you do not concentrate enough in class.

We wish you all the best in the future. David Biltcliffe

Lead inspector