

De Lisle Catholic Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120304
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327254
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Wheeldon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1313
Sixth form	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Murphy
Headteacher	Christopher Davies
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 October 2005
School address	Thorpe Hill Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 4SQ
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. Inspectors visited 32 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and various groups of pupils, including the school council. Amongst other tasks, they looked at school development plans and teachers' lesson plans, scrutinised a sample of the students' work and analysed assessment data. They also analysed 308 questionnaires that had been completed by parents and a further 82 that had been completed by staff at the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at:

- the progress of students
- the curriculum offered by the school and whether students are given suitable advice to help them make informed choices about the courses on offer
- the school's arrangements for monitoring its work, including the arrangements for monitoring the performance of individual students
- the development of students' social skills.

Information about the school

De Lisle College is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school. It has been a specialist science college since 2003 and was awarded a second specialism as an applied learning college in December 2007.

The school's admissions policy gives priority to Catholic children, then to other Christians, members of other faiths and finally to those who express no particular faith. Although students come from 25 primary schools, most are from the seven Catholic primary schools across North Leicestershire, therefore many travel significant distances to school, by service bus or on school coaches.

De Lisle is one of only two 11 to 18 schools in Leicestershire, and the only 11 to 18 Catholic School. Most schools in the county are for students aged 11 to 14 or 14 to 18. Consequently a small number of students transfer to De Lisle at the beginning of Year 10. Similarly, a few students join the sixth form from other schools.

The current headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1313	Larger than average
Free school meals	3.1%	Very low
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	12.1%	Lower than average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	10.0%	Lower than average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	3.4%	Very low
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2.4%	Slightly higher than average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

De Lisle Catholic Science College is a well-led school which successfully prepares its students for further and higher education and for their future employment. Examination results are very high at the end of Year 11 and so the great majority of students choose to continue their studies at the college. Outstanding provision in the sixth form means that results are very high at the end of Year 13.

Students enjoy being here. The strong Catholic ethos, and excellent pastoral care and support ensure students feel safe at school. Their social skills are good and they make an excellent contribution to the school and the local community.

Leadership of the school is good. Governors and senior staff have a clear vision for the school's future as a Catholic science and applied learning specialist college, and have already introduced changes to bring about further improvement. Changes in arrangements for monitoring the performance of pupils have not yet had a full impact and are satisfactory at present.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good, but it varies. As a result, the progress of students is good, but this also varies. In general, progress is better in Years 10, 11 and 13 than it is in Years 7 to 9 and Year 12.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards even further the school should:
 - use assessment data more rigorously to ensure all students make consistently good progress through the school
 - use the outstanding teaching in the school to help improve the satisfactory teaching, so that the quality of teaching is at least good in all lessons
 - ensure pupils' work is marked regularly and that teachers' comments help students understand what they must do to improve.
- As a matter of urgency, the school should work with all responsible parties to ensure greater safety for pupils as they board buses at the end of school.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

The overall attainment of students is high when they arrive at the school. Progress is good overall and is better in Key Stage 4 than it is at Key Stage 3, so examination results are very high at the end of Year 11. The progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is equally good. Because there are so few students from different ethnic backgrounds, statistical comparisons are unsound. The same is true about looked after children. However, there are examples of such students doing very well at the school.

Spiritual and moral development are excellent. Corporate acts of worship are used well to challenge students' thinking about moral issues and they have good opportunities for reflection and to consider the needs of others. Students enjoy being at the school and feel very safe here.

Students are extremely well prepared for the next step in their education or training and for future employment. In lessons, students successfully apply earlier learning, especially literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills, in practical contexts and they work very effectively in pairs and small groups. Students play an excellent part in the life of the school and the wider community and, when given the opportunity, they use their initiative very well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school's work

The teaching is generally good, although some is outstanding and some is only satisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching is rare. Teachers usually plan a variety of challenging tasks and thus engage students well. For example, in a good science lesson, students worked enthusiastically in groups to plan and enact a number of plays about heatstroke and hypothermia. In the outstanding lessons, teachers are prepared to try different approaches to learning, skilfully handle difficult situations and ensure that lesson objectives are met. Where the teaching is less effective, the pace is not brisk enough, teachers tend to talk for too long and consequently, students do not make as much progress as they could.

The school works closely with other providers and with employers to ensure that it provides a broad and stimulating curriculum. For example, there is a very good choice of science options for students in Key Stage 4 and an exciting cross-curricular programme in Years 7 and 8. Students feel they are given good advice on making option choices. The school also offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Although the marking of students' work is sometimes very informative, for example in English, art and religious studies, it is often cursory in other subjects. Arrangements for assessing and monitoring students' progress are changing. They are satisfactory at present but there is more to do to ensure the school maintains and improves current standards and achievement.

By contrast, the school's pastoral support is excellent and pupils know whom to turn to for guidance. The school, as a member of a strong Catholic community, provides outstanding support for students and families facing difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is well placed to make further improvement, and supportive governors are keen to maintain present high standards. The new headteacher has wisely taken time to review existing practices before implementing changes. More robust arrangements for monitoring the performance of the school have been established but the impact is yet to be seen. Even so, with very high results and a relatively low income, value for money is excellent.

Strong relationships with parents and with partner agencies and organisations have a very positive impact on students' learning. Other aspects of the school's work are

good: the school is effective at combating racial discrimination and makes a good contribution to students’ understanding of community cohesion.

Accommodation is cramped, corridors are very narrow and room use is intensive. The school manages the movement of students well to avoid too many bottlenecks, but classrooms are often unkempt, cluttered and lack visual stimulation.

In most respects, safeguarding arrangements are excellent, but inspectors are concerned about the safety of students as they rush to get on buses at the end of the day.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Sixth form provision is outstanding. Retention rates are excellent, students make good progress in most subjects and examination results are very high at the end of Year 13. Progress is better in Year 13 than it is in Year 12. The school recognises this and has recently introduced new arrangements to monitor students’ progress but it is too early to measure the impact. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The quality of teaching is very good, and often outstanding. The curriculum is equally good and students have a good range of courses from which to choose.

The personal development of sixth formers is excellent. Their attitudes to education are very good. Students are enthusiastic learners; they are mature, friendly and make a valuable contribution to the work of the school. For example, many of them act as mentors and thus have a positive influence on the development of younger students.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of staff, parents and carers

Most of the teaching and support staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said they enjoy working at the school and many commented on the friendly supportive environment in which they work. Middle managers, in particular, are very positive about the school. The majority of class teachers who responded agree, but about a third feel that students' behaviour is not managed effectively. A high proportion of support staff responded and their views are similar to the teachers'.

Over two thirds of the parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are entirely happy with all aspects of the school's work and the progress of their child. A good number wrote very positively about the school and it is clear that these parents see the school as a warm, welcoming place of learning that their child enjoys attending, a view with which the inspectors agree. Parents particularly value the Christian ethos and the caring environment. There was also praise for the support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for the range of extra-curricular activities.

Just under a third of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are not content with one or more aspect of the school's work. About one fifth of the parents who responded are concerned about the quality of some of the supply teaching, but the inspection team was unable to draw any conclusion about this because of limited evidence. A slightly smaller proportion say they are not given sufficient information about their child's progress. The school is aware of this concern and is changing its reporting arrangements. About one tenth of the parents are unhappy with behaviour, but inspectors found it to be good. Amongst other issues, smaller numbers of parents are unhappy about the school's attention to individual pupils' needs, and promoting healthy lifestyles, both of which were judged good by the inspection team.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of De Lisle Catholic Science College, Loughborough, LE11 4SA

It was a pleasure to meet so many of you when we recently inspected the school. I am most grateful to you for making me and the other inspectors so welcome.

You know that the school's examination results are very high, both at GCSE and in the sixth form. That is one good reason for choosing to be here, but there are many others. We found that the support provided by the school is outstanding and this has a very positive impact on you as students. We felt that the school prepares you very well for the future, whether in education or employment.

Even though this is such a good school, there is still room for improvement. In order to raise standards even further, I have asked the school to:

- make better use of assessment data to keep track of your progress
- ensure that all the teaching is as good as the best
- make sure your work is marked regularly and that teachers give you more help to understand how you can improve.

We are also concerned about the scramble for buses and coaches at the end of the day so I have asked the school to investigate how arrangements can be improved so that nobody gets hurt. In the meantime, please be very careful boarding buses – a few extra moments will not delay your journey.

The full report is quite short so I very much hope you might take the time to read it all.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wheeldon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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