



**DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



**Inspection Report**

**Name of School:** De La Salle Language College  
**LEA:** Essex  
**Inspection Date:** 8 February 2016  
**Reporting Inspector:** Damian G Fox and Derek Kelly

**This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

<b>Type of School:</b>	<b>Secondary comprehensive</b>	<b>School Address:</b>
<b>School Category:</b>	<b>Voluntary Aided</b>	<b>Ghyllgrove</b>
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	<b>11 – 16 yrs</b>	<b>Basildon</b>
<b>Gender of pupils:</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>SS14 2LA</b>
<b>Number on roll:</b>	<b>738</b>	
<b>Appropriate Authority:</b>	<b>The Governing Body</b>	<b>Tel. No. 01268 281234</b>
<b>Date of previous inspection:</b>	<b>June 30 2010</b>	<b>Headteacher: Dr M Curnock</b>
		<b>Chair of Governors: Max Collias</b>

## **Information about the school**

De La Salle Language College is a Catholic school in the County of Essex in the diocese of Brentwood. There are currently 738 students aged 11-16 on roll. The school is over subscribed with 500 applicants for 150 places in 2015. 51.6% of pupils are boys and 48.6% are girls. 29.4% of pupils are catholic. 37.2% are from other Christian faiths. There are two Catholic feeder schools. The school serves three parishes with the Parish Priest based at Our Lady and All Saints in Basildon.

Levels of attainment on entry are below the national average. The predominant cultural heritage is white working class. 48% of pupils are from economically deprived families. Currently, 24% of pupils are on the Special Needs Register, above the national average of 20%. This includes 6% of pupils with a statement or EHC plan, above the national average of 2%. There are 11.4% of pupils for whom English is not the first language. 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is above average.

There are 48.1 fte. teachers of whom 45% are Catholic. One teacher holds the CCRS and three have other catholic qualifications in Theology and Catholic Leadership. There are five teachers of Religious Education.

### **Key grades for inspection**

1: Outstanding      2: Good      3: Requires Improvement      4: Inadequate

### **Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school**

**Grade 2**

De La Salle College is a good school with some outstanding features. Leaders, governors and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. Governors are supportive of the school and are fully informed of progress and areas for development. The Link Governor is proactive in monitoring the catholic life of the school and standards of teaching and learning in Religious Education. The Head Teacher's vision for further sustained progress in Religious Education and for embedding spirituality in the lives of staff and pupils, is understood and shared by the whole community. The Chaplain provides outstanding service to staff and pupils in engaging them in the preparation of and participation in collective worship. In discussion and in lessons, pupils displayed an appreciation of what the school provides and they have an obvious pride in the school and in their own achievements.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the school. There are good opportunities for students' spiritual and moral development. Pastoral care for students is outstanding. Relationships within the school are very good and students feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parental feedback shows that the overwhelming majority of parents are happy with the provision of the school and the support it gives to their children.

The capacity of the school to make further progress is good. Governors acknowledge that a new committee will ensure that there is more effective monitoring and evaluation of the catholic life and religious education. There are detailed plans to move the school from good to outstanding. Inspectors recommend that Governors use Diocesan services to ensure that the transition to a new Head Teacher is effectively managed.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Ensure that Governors have the capacity to manage the transition to a new Head Teacher effectively. They should seek diocesan support if appropriate.

Set up a distinct Governors' committee for Catholic Life and Religious Education to ensure that there are detailed planning and monitoring processes as part of the whole school self - review process.

Ensure that the liturgy group is embedded so that all pupils become active participants in the prayer life of the school.

## **Outcomes for students**

## **Grade 2**

Standards of attainment and levels of progress in Religious Education have improved rapidly over the last three years. GCSE results in Religious Education have improved from 49% to 64%. 30% of pupils achieved A\*/A, up from 7% in 2013, and 46% achieved A\*/B, up from 22% in 2013. The school accepts that the challenge is to sustain this rapid progress over time.

Most lesson observations showed that pupils are highly motivated. This was evident in a year 10 class where pupils exuded real enjoyment in learning and as a result were able to discuss the complex moral issues regarding priestly celibacy. Pupils have an enthusiasm for tackling challenging activities and are keen to apply themselves diligently. They respond positively to well established behaviour expectations and strategies. The quality of written work overall shows that pupils are proud of their learning and are making good progress with some making outstanding progress.

Pupils value and respect the Catholic tradition of the school and its very strong links with the parish community. Senior pupils spoke warmly about the impact of the ethos of the school on relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils across all ages. A year 11 pupil said that teachers put in a lot of extra time when they do not have to because they care. Pupils treat each other with high levels of respect and are aware that their actions have consequences for others. They feel safe and know that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by school and pupil leaders. The Parish Priest said that catholicity is secure for the future and that the chaplaincy structure will contribute to further development of the catholic life of the school.

Pupils understand the needs of others in the local and wider community. The Field of Dreams summer programme, run by the Parish, gives pupils an opportunity to pray and to put their faith into action by serving others in the community. Pupils also serve in a local school to support pupils with disabilities and with moderate and severe learning difficulties. After a staff bereavement last year, all pupils wrote messages of sympathy to the family and offered prayers for them. They raised money for the British Heart Foundation.

Pupils confirm that prayer, assemblies and masses are a part of their lives. They are at ease when praying and talking about their faith. Non catholic pupils say that they appreciate the impact prayer has on the caring ethos of the school. There is a voluntary mass and key stage assembly every week and daily prayers in the form rooms. The Parish Priest described pupils as enthusiastic participants in worship. Acts of worship engage pupils' interest and inspire them to act with reverence. In the year 7 assembly, pupils were respectful participants throughout and showed a lot of interest. Pupils are actively involved in preparing the weekly mass and that the Chaplain helps them understand the theme each Friday. Each form takes a turn in preparing the readings and prayers.

The new chapel has a prominent place in the school and contains a mosaic which was created by pupils. It is a spiritual and prayerful oasis for the whole community. The Parish Priest described it as an "encouraging and calm place". The school should now make the chapel a focus for development to enhance the catholic life and spiritual opportunities the school offers. Although pupils reflect prayerfully, the school should consider giving more opportunities for them to say prayers together and offer their own individual intentions. Pupils' prayers could be collected to begin a unique De la Salle prayer book for future generations.

The liturgy group is being reformed. This will offer pupils greater opportunities to prepare a variety of acts of worship and inspire others to participate even more through reading and singing.

## **Leaders and managers**

## **Grade 1**

Leaders, Governors and managers demonstrate a deep commitment to the Church's mission in education. The Governors are effective in their monitoring role and in both supporting and challenging the Senior Leaders. They are kept fully informed through the Head Teacher's reports and through their regular visits to the school. They have a clear vision for the growth and impact of the Catholic and spiritual life of the school.

The Head Teacher has had and continues to have a major impact on the growth of spirituality in the school community. Governors, the Parish Priest and pupils all acknowledge his commitment to everybody in the community and that there was “an ambience of care” across the school. His spiritual strength and personal faith are manifest in his own relationships with pupils and the obvious “Gospel in action” which permeates throughout their lives.

Chaplaincy is a strength of the school. The Chaplain is the parish youth coordinator and works closely with the Parish Priest in developing the prayer life. She is making a very positive impact to the catholic life of the school. Older pupils confirmed their appreciation of her contribution. Most of the year 7 pupils are not catholic but they soon become aware of the spiritual ethos of the school. In her view, they are “respectful of the faith”. She provides prayer resources for all form teachers although she acknowledges that monitoring their use needs improving.

Governors and the Head Teacher monitor the progress of the RE department with a detailed tracking system and with a programme of lesson observations. Governors understand their role in ensuring that standards continue to improve. A new and distinct committee for catholic life and teaching and learning would help establish monitoring and planning procedures to support the new Head Teacher.

The Head of Department is an experienced and effective leader of Religious Education. The monitoring and evaluation process is detailed and robust. New assessment procedures have ensured greater focus on highlighting underachievement of pupils of all abilities. Interventions are appropriate and quickly put in place. Progress trackers and report cards are extensively used. Consequently, attainment levels have improved rapidly over the last three years.

Leaders monitor the work of the Religious Education department through regular lesson observations, the scrutiny of exercise books and rigorous tracking of pupils’ progress. Data is collected and used to set targets for the department and for pupils across the ability range.

The School’s Self Evaluation was honest and accurate and reflected their many achievements. Leaders have identified areas for development.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 2**

The quality of teaching is good overall with outstanding features. In all lessons, pupils are given a clear direction for learning. Lessons are well planned to ensure the development of pupils’ prior learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding. There is marked pupil enthusiasm and enjoyment in lessons. The better examples of teaching are characterised by the high level of challenge, excellent subject knowledge the use of key words. In a Year 10 class, for example, pupils demonstrated a high level of religious literacy, which is a key departmental priority. In nearly all lessons, behaviour was outstanding and demonstrated a mutual respect for one another. All teachers are positive and praise the pupils appropriately. The marking and the dialogue between teachers and pupils is generally of a very high quality and offers guidance to pupils on how they might progress.

At KS 3, lessons focus on the ICONS programme of study. At GCSE, since the last inspection, the school has developed the teaching of Catholic Christianity. The curriculum is presented in a way which is relevant to the pupils’ understanding of how they can and should live as Christians. Schemes of work at key stage 3 have been adapted to include GCSE concepts and skills. There is capacity for the school to sustain achievement in the long term to embed the rapid progress made over the last three years.

The time allocated for KS4 is 10%, and 8% for KS3. This is complemented by improved attainment and progress in Religious Education and by the time given to assemblies and masses.

The impact of the curriculum in its wider sense is excellent. Pupils know they are part of a caring, happy faith community. The curriculum is enriched by the many opportunities for charity work throughout the year such as fundraising for chemotherapy wards in the local hospital and the women’s refuge. Throughout the school the many displays reflect the deep commitment of the school to its Catholic identity and pupils’ learning. The main entrance has 12 large coloured windows to represent the 12 Apostles. Television screens display passages from scripture or

spiritual sayings. Of special note was the memorial table which was set up last year in response to the death of a staff member. All pupils wrote messages of sympathy to the family and participated in the memorial mass.

Acts of collective worship are given a high profile and are well resourced. There are extensive and varied religious experiences for staff and pupils to pray together. There is a weekly voluntary mass, which the Parish Priest confirmed was well planned and attended by pupils. There is a detailed weekly plan of collective worship.

Pupils confirm that prayer is "embedded" into their lives in the school. Prayer is not just at the start of the day. It is also in assemblies and masses. One assembly on the temptations of Jesus provided a prayerful experience for pupils. The candles, lilies and music created an atmosphere that pupils responded to reverently. There was a lot of reflection time. The school should consider developing opportunities for more individual intentions and collective prayers.

Pupils take part in events outside school which provide opportunities for worship. The Wolsingham walk and Fellowship Afloat provide a valuable experience of prayer that is led by and for young people. Pupils appreciate that prayer is part of their lives.