

Inspection of The De La Salle Academy

Carr Lane East, Croxteth, Liverpool, Merseyside L11 4SG

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have been failed for far too long at The De La Salle Academy. Leaders and trustees have not done enough to improve the school.

Across the school, pupils' achievement is exceptionally low in too many subjects. Current pupils have extremely wide gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders and teachers do not expect enough from pupils.

Pupils have very weak mathematical skills. In 2019, pupils' attainment in mathematics declined to an all-time low. Current pupils are not faring any better.

Owing to financial issues, too many pupils have experienced a very narrow curriculum. Although art, drama, geography and technology have now been re-introduced, many pupils missed out on learning these subjects from Year 7. Music is still not offered.

There is a deep-rooted culture of poor attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This prevents these pupils from learning and achieving well.

Pupils' behaviour has improved over time. Leaders have successfully established a culture where pupils can now learn. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. However, some pupils do not behave well at social times.

Pupils told us that bullying is dealt with effectively and that they feel safe. Pupils appreciate the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer, including sports, chess and the cadets. They enjoy taking part in charity work and educational visits. Pupils' personal development is very strong.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous inspection, leaders and trustees have failed to address all of the areas for improvement left at the last inspection. They have not demonstrated the capacity to improve the school at the pace required. In particular, leaders have been unable to improve pupils' academic outcomes. Pupils' achievement across the school is exceptionally poor.

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is unacceptable. In 2019, hardly any disadvantaged pupils achieved a standard pass in English, mathematics or science. Pupils with SEND achieved equally poorly. Teachers do not think carefully about how to plan and adapt the curriculum so that these pupils are set up for a bright future.

In September 2019, leaders introduced revised curriculum plans across all subjects. These are at the early stages of roll-out. The quality of the new curriculum varies considerably. Overall, there are many deficiencies in curriculum planning and

delivery. Too many staff do not think carefully about the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember. They do not plan learning in a way that will bridge the wide gaps in pupils' understanding. Current pupils' work highlights a lack of depth and substance to the curriculum. Too many pupils cannot recall key facts and important concepts.

The curriculum has lacked breadth, depth and ambition. Over time, leaders have not ensured that pupils study an ambitious curriculum. In 2019, no pupils were entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). In the current Year 11, only 3% of pupils are following this suite of subjects. Leaders have taken far too long to implement the curriculum changes needed to ensure that pupils are well prepared for their future.

Conversely, the provision for pupils' personal development is very strong. It outshines the school's academic curriculum. Pupils are listened to and they have an active voice in the running of the school. Pastoral support is a key strength. Pupils benefit from a well-structured personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. Pupils take pride in being anti-bullying ambassadors. The programme of careers education is well developed.

Although leaders have made some marginal improvements to pupils' attendance, there remain endemic weaknesses in this area. Just over one third of pupils continue to be regularly absent from school. The attendance of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils has been consistently low since the last inspection. This is wholly unacceptable.

Leaders have secured marked improvements to pupils' behaviour. Exclusions have decreased dramatically. Pupils and staff said that behaviour is much better now. Leaders only permanently exclude pupils as a last resort.

Some pupils are sent to alternative provision for a short period of time due to personal or behavioural issues. They follow a very narrow curriculum while out of school. Pupils do not receive the help that they need to catch up when they return to school. Instead, the range of subjects that they study is often reduced. This disadvantages them further.

Leaders have stabilised staffing and reduced the number of temporary teachers in the school. Pupils are delighted that they finally have a full complement of specialist teachers in mathematics. Over time, pupils have been let down significantly in mathematics due to weak curriculum leadership and frequent changes to staffing.

Leaders have provided training to develop subject leadership. However, this has not improved the delivery of the curriculum.

Leaders and trustees pay due attention to staff workload and well-being. Staff feel valued and supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders undertake the required checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils. Staff receive appropriate training to recognise potential signs of abuse. Staff also receive additional training on issues that are pertinent to the school, such as how to help young carers. The principal works closely with the police and shares information with staff when issues in the community arise.

Leaders work effectively with different agencies to protect pupils. There is a wide range of information relating to safety on the school's website. This helps parents and carers to support their children with issues such as emotional abuse and teenage depression. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through special days that are dedicated to raising pupils' awareness of different risks. They cover many topics such as mental health and well-being and knife crime.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not learn well. Pupils have underachieved considerably for far too long. As a result, the majority of pupils have not gained the qualifications that they need for the next stages of their education. Leaders and trustees must take rapid action to improve the quality of education so that outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, improve quickly.
- The proportion of pupils attaining a standard pass in mathematics has declined to an unacceptable level. By the end of key stage 4, the majority of pupils are unable to apply mathematical skills sufficiently well for their age. Leaders must take rapid action to improve pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics so that they are ready for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Although leaders have begun to make changes to the curriculum, it is currently not well planned, sequenced or implemented across a wide range of subjects. Leaders and teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. As a result, there are wide gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils fail to remember the important knowledge that they need in order to be successful. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is consistently well planned, sequenced and implemented so that pupils can learn effectively.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is ineffective. These pupils do not benefit from a good-quality education. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not have their needs adequately met across many subjects. Their achievement is poor. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is well planned for pupils with SEND so that they can catch up with their peers and achieve well.
- When pupils are sent to alternative provision for short periods of time, many follow a very narrow curriculum. These pupils do not receive adequate help and

support to keep up with the curriculum that other pupils are following back in school. When these pupils return to school, they have missed large chunks of work and do not catch up. As a result, leaders reduce the number of subjects that these pupils study. This does not promote equality of opportunity. Leaders must ensure that pupils who attend alternative provision are supported to follow the full curriculum and catch up when they return to school.

- Pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, do not attend school regularly enough. While leaders have tried to improve pupils' attendance, it is still not good enough. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains far too high. Leaders must rapidly improve pupils' attendance.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has suffered from significant financial difficulties that have restricted the subjects on offer to pupils. The curriculum has not been broad and balanced. While art, technology and geography have been re-introduced, there are currently no formal music lessons. Also, pupils currently in Year 11 do not follow an appropriately academic curriculum. Leaders must ensure that pupils access an ambitious curriculum that prepares them well for the next stages of their education, employment or training.
- Leaders and trustees of the school have not demonstrated the capacity to improve the school at the pace required. The changes that they have made have been implemented too slowly. Leaders at all levels have failed to address many of the areas for improvement left at the last inspection. As a result, pupils have experienced a poor-quality education for far too long. They have underachieved significantly. Leaders and trustees must take rapid action to ensure that pupils receive a good-quality education and that key weaknesses are addressed.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136409
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10121997
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Owens
Principal	David Hayes
Website	www.de-la-salle.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	4–5 October 2017

Information about this school

- The school was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act on 1 May 2018.
- The school has been managing a significant financial deficit since the last inspection. The school received a financial notice to improve which has now been lifted.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll is increasing.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at: STAR-SLA, Harmonize Academy AP Free School, JMH Training, Alder Centre for Education and SGI Sports Education.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, 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.

It is strongly recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

- We held meetings with the principal, head of school, and senior and middle leaders.
- We met with the governing body who are the trustees of the school, the school improvement partner and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. A phone call was made to a member of the academy trust board. We also contacted an alternative provider used by the school.
- We held meetings with the special educational needs coordinator, the raising achievement lead, those responsible for safeguarding, those responsible for attendance and behaviour, and those with oversight of pupils' personal development.
- We checked on safeguarding documentation, including the school's appointment checks on staff. We reviewed a selection of minutes of recent governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan.
- We spoke to groups of pupils in both key stages, both formally and informally, to gather their views on the school.
- We considered the views of the 122 pupils and the 13 staff who responded to Ofsted's online surveys. We also considered the views expressed by parents in the seven responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received via the free-text facility.
- In considering the quality of education, we looked in depth at English, mathematics, history and science. We met with those responsible for each curriculum area, visited a wide range of lessons, met with teachers and pupils from the lessons visited and reviewed pupils' work. We also considered the curriculum provision in a range of other subjects including art, computing, drama, physical education and sociology.

Inspection team

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