



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Denominational (S48) Inspection Report

Name of School: De La Salle School
Local Authority: Essex County Council

Inspection Date: 23 March 2022

Reporting Inspector: Tom Cahill (Lead Inspector)
Damian Fox (Associate Inspector)

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 and 2011.

Type of School:	Secondary	School Address:	Ghyllgrove
School Category:	Voluntary Aided		Basildon
Age range of pupils:	11-16		Essex
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		SS14 2LA
Number on roll:	756		
Appropriate Authority:	The Governing Body	Tel. No.	01268 281234
Date of previous inspection:	08 February 2016	Headteacher:	Mr Paul Norris
		Chair of Governors:	Mr Liam Connolly

Information about the school

De La Salle is a Catholic school in the County of Essex and within the Diocese of Brentwood. There are currently 756 students aged 11-16 on roll. The school is oversubscribed with 500 applicants for 150 places in 2021. 49 % of students are boys and 51% are girls. 23% of students are baptised Catholics and 34% are from other Christian faiths. There are two main Catholic feeder schools in Basildon although the school has a very wide catchment area reflecting the growing popularity of the school. 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 and a significant number are from economically deprived families. Currently, 13% of pupils are on the Special Needs Register, above the national average of 12.2%. This includes 3.8 % of pupils with an EHCP which is above the national average of 3%. There are 19.3% of pupils for whom English is not the first language. 29.2% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is above average and 36.4% of students are entitled to Pupil Premium Grant

There are 49.8 FTE. teachers of whom 37% are Catholic. Three teachers hold the CCRS and three have other Catholic qualifications in Theology and Catholic Leadership. There are four teachers of Religious Education and the school employs a full-time lay Chaplain. The school is celebrating its 50th anniversary during 2022 having opened in 1972.

The school has implemented the recommendations of the previous report in 2016 and 10% of curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Religious Education as recommended by the Bishops' Conference. The school's RSE policy is also in line with Diocesan guidelines.

Key grades for inspection

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

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

De La Salle Basildon is an outstanding Catholic school. Since the previous inspection in 2016, the school has gone from strength to strength. The improvements at the school are a result of exceptionally strong leadership from senior leaders and governors and a dedicated and hard-working staff. Students thrive in this highly inclusive multi faith community where Lasallian values based on the charism of St John Baptist De La Salle pervade every aspect of school life. These values ensure students enjoy outstanding pastoral care and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are also outstanding and they develop as well rounded individuals.

What the school should do to improve further:

- Continue to develop the Religious Education curriculum and focus on the quality of teaching so that the needs of all students are met and they make outstanding progress and achieve outstanding attainment in Religious Education.
- Develop a prayer garden to further enrich the prayer life of the school.

Catholic life at De La Salle Basildon is outstanding. The values of St John Baptist De La Salle pervade every aspect of school life allowing every student to flourish and reach their potential. Students benefit hugely from being part of this multi faith school which many students and staff described as being part of their own family and with Christ at its heart. The school proudly proclaims its Catholic heritage and has many religious icons and imagery throughout the school.

Students spoke warmly and enthusiastically of the highly caring and safe ethos that has been created by the school in which everyone, no matter their background is made to feel welcome and accepted. Any form of bullying or discrimination is simply not accepted and if it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students develop a keen sense of what is right and wrong and behave accordingly and their behaviour is outstanding. Pastoral care of all students is outstanding and highly effective and staff go above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of those in their care. Students show great respect towards each other and their teachers and this results in a happy and positive atmosphere which supports their very positive attitudes to learning. Students really are excellent ambassadors for the school and very much appreciate their hardworking teachers and support staff who go the extra mile to support them throughout their time at the school. The school fosters an atmosphere of positivity and a culture of reward based on the 5 Lasallian values of: Faith, inclusivity, social justice, quality education and respect. Students enthusiastically participate in large numbers to achieve Lasallian awards and many have achieved 25 or more which bestows gold status on them.

Students have many opportunities to enrich their faith journey and to develop leadership skills as well as providing service and support to others. Students raise significant amounts of money to help those in greatest need and they respond generously where they can to address social injustices. They support a number of charities including: Churches in Need, Brentwood Catholic Children's Society, CAFOD, local homeless charities such as Caritas Anchor House and Young Minds which supports young people's mental health.

Students keenly take on servant leadership roles such as prefects, chaplaincy reps and Lasallian ambassadors. They benefit from being part of the global network of Lasallian schools and students have the chance to travel internationally and to link with other Lasallian schools. These national and global links bring many benefits whilst developing a world-wide community

Prior to Covid, the school had an extensive programme of retreats which have been placed on hold due to the pandemic. The school will restart the programme when possible including the planned trip to Lourdes.

Students also benefit from the hard-working full-time and experienced Chaplain who is well known and respected by the school community. Together with the Headteacher, he has established what is known as the Chaplain's Hub based in the heart of the students play area. It provides a safe and calm atmosphere for the most vulnerable students and is very well used. It was a delight for inspectors to see the impact of this provision which is building their confidence, raising their self-esteem and supporting their wellbeing. The hub is supervised by the Chaplain but also the prefects, Chaplaincy reps and other staff. During the pandemic, when the school was closed, he ensured students and staff could continue to participate in prayer and worship through the use of online resources and broadcasts from the Chapel. He is also taking the lead in the training and induction of staff to be Eucharistic ministers and is the national coordinator for ACCE representing chaplains in Catholic schools nationwide.

Parents are overwhelming supportive of the school as seen in the number of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire. As one parent wrote "De La Salle is a very inclusive community based on Gospel values and the teachings of Jesus." Other parents wrote about "a school where everyone is valued" and "The school is just like being part of a family which has very strong ethos which is calm, empowering and caring". Almost all parental responses shared elements of these themes. Parents feel very supported by the school. This support extends beyond the school gates including providing free breakfasts for those entitled to free lunches. Parents expressed their grateful thanks to the staff for their dedication and commitment during the recent pandemic by ensuring their children's education continued

remotely and staff kept in regular contact with families especially those most in need. The school also ensured those families without access to IT were not disadvantaged during home learning including the provision of laptops and access to the internet.

Parents are kept very well informed about the Catholic life of the school through regular newsletters and a well-designed school website. The website includes a detailed analysis of what is taught in Religious Education and the values and ethos the school seeks to engender.

The Headteacher and governors have a clear vision for their school and it is widely shared and understood by everyone in the school community. They have developed a clear mission statement which is well known by everyone in the school community and they keep it under review. They have an excellent understanding of the purpose of Catholic education and they work in close partnership with each other for the benefit of the students. Governance is now outstanding and is based on a powerful blend of both support and challenge for senior leaders as well as a clear love for the school and its community. They know their school very well and their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement are accurate and were fully endorsed by the inspectors. It is clear that the inspirational leadership by the Headteacher, who is a past pupil of the school and the highly effective governing body has brought about the significant improvements at the school since the last inspection in 2016. Their commitment to developing the Catholic life of the school is also reflected in the fact the school has a full time Chaplain and they have established a Catholic Life and Ethos committee to plan, monitor and evaluate this aspect of school life.

Staff feel very much valued, trusted and supported by senior leaders. As a result, they are loyal, committed and hardworking and staff turnover is low. New staff are carefully inducted into the distinctive ethos of the school and told inspectors they feel very well supported. A number of staff send their children to the school which reflects their confidence in the high-quality education it provides its students.

Religious Education at De La Salle is good overall with a number of outstanding features. Students enjoy their Religious Education lessons and hold their teachers in high regard. Their excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress in the subject. Their attainment in Religious Education is also good. Data provided by the school during the inspection indicated that progress and attainment of students was rapidly improving and on an upward trend. Evidence seen by inspectors in lessons and in work books also supported the trends shown in the data the results achieved by the students at the end of Key Stage 4 are now similar if not better than other core subjects. The school is aware that the achievement of boys is not as strong as girls which is a trend in the other core subjects as well as in line with national trends. The school is taking appropriate action to narrow this gap. Since the previous inspection, staffing in Religious Education has become more stable and staff turnover is very much reduced. With the department introducing more appropriate and challenging courses at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the progress and attainment of students has the capacity to be outstanding. The department is aware that it needs a particular focus of stretching the more able and is taking appropriate action.

Religious Education teachers are enthusiastic, hardworking and committed to ensuring their students flourish and achieve in the subject. Their classroom management is excellent. As one member of staff said "Teachers trust the students and the students respond positively". They are well qualified and there is a growing focus on improving teaching further by developing their questioning techniques and introducing a greater variety of teaching styles. In an outstanding Year 11 lesson seen during the inspection, the students were fully engaged through paired discussions. There was a high level of mutual respect and the use of whole class feedback showed pupils clearly understood the 'for' and 'against' elements of an argument when responding to an extending writing question of a GCSE past paper. There was a brisk pace to the lesson and open-ended questions challenged students to think more deeply about the topic.

The department is developing a bespoke course at Key Stage 3 which will better meet the needs of all the students. The school has ensured that the content of the Key Stage 3 course meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory for Religious Education. At Key Stage 4, the department is changing from Edexcel to Eduqas examination board as it feels the course better meets the needs of the students and builds upon the new, more challenging and engaging course at Key Stage 3. The school has taken great care to prepare for the change and is working with other Catholic schools who have made a similar change and to share ideas and resources with these schools.

Assessment is a developing strength of the department and students have a clear idea on what they must do to improve and achieve the higher levels at GCSE. Work books showed evidence of marking although the quality was more variable in some books. The department is aware of this and is taking steps to further improve the quality of marking and feedback. Students who fall behind are quickly identified and intervention strategies are implemented to close any gaps in their learning. As a result, all pupils including Pupil Premium and SEN make at least good progress in line with their peers.

Leadership of the department is outstanding. The subject leader is both long serving and experienced and is also a member of the school's senior leadership team. She has a clear vision for the department and is driving the department forward through collaborative teamwork. Leadership in the department has been further enhanced by the appointment of a lead practitioner which supports the school's commitment to further improve the quality of teaching in the subject and is already having a significant impact on the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders and governors are very supportive of the department and ensure it is well resourced in line with other core subjects. Their commitment is reflected in the fact they have appointed additional staff to the department. This has allowed curriculum time at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to increase to 10% which is in line with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference. This is a further improvement since the previous inspection and will further support by raising attainment of students in the subject. The department enjoys bright and spacious specialist accommodation and a resources

base. The learning environment is further enhanced by the use of high-quality display which is well maintained and updated regularly.

The performance of the department is monitored closely by senior leaders and the link governor. They regularly undertake visits and learning walks to highlight good practice and to identify areas for further improvement.

Collective worship at De La Salle is outstanding in almost all respects. The school provides many opportunities for collective worship including prayers each morning and regular weekly assemblies. A Lasallian blessing is recited at the end of every lesson. All classrooms have a focus for prayer and collective worship is carefully planned by the Chaplain and senior leaders to ensure it meets the needs of all the students. The themes of collective worship follow the liturgical calendar. Students' behaviour is always excellent during collective worship, and they show great respect and reverence at all times. Students have the opportunity to write their own prayers and to plan and deliver assemblies. They listen attentively and the high-quality assemblies ensure they are engaged and can participate whenever possible. Due to Covid, singing has been put on hold but the school has a number of choirs and an orchestra and the school will reintroduce singing as soon as practical.

In an excellent assembly seen during the inspection, the students entered the sports hall in an orderly and prayerful way. The Chaplain had selected a suitable hymn to be played as the students took their places. A candle was lit to remind everyone that "where a few are gathered in his name, God will be present." The theme of the assembly delivered by the Chaplain was 'One Body but many parts'. He skilfully used students to form a line up as for a rugby scrum. He outlined the different parts the players took in the scrum but pointed out that although there are many players in a scrum, there is still only one scrum or body. Students were given the time to reflect on the about being one part of the body of the school and the importance of working together for the common good.

The school is fortunate to have a beautiful chapel located above the main entrance. A voluntary Mass is offered every Friday in the chapel, celebrated by one of the local priests. Currently the Blessed Sacrament is not reserved in the Chapel but there are plans for this to happen. The bright and peaceful setting of the Chapel enhances the quality of collective worship at the school. The mosaic on the floor around the altar is simply a stunning creation and adds to the uniqueness of the school chapel. The school is also fortunate to have a large open green site and inspectors felt that prayer life at the school could be further enhanced by creating a prayer garden close to the main play areas which could be easily used by students and staff of all faiths.

Mass is also celebrated on major feast days in the sport hall which can accommodate the whole school. The walls of the sports hall are adorned with impressive displays which highlight and celebrate the 5 Lasallian values held dear by the school community. Students are also provided with the opportunity to participate in acts of reconciliation again with the generous support of local priests. The school is fortunate to have a number of local priests to call upon but this year one priest has taken special responsibility for the school. He is a regular visitor to the school and students and staff speak positively about the impact he is having on prayer life and collective worship at the school.

Senior leaders and governors carefully monitor and evaluate the quality of collective worship through their once termly meeting of the Catholic life and Ethos subcommittee. This in turn feeds back to the whole of the governing body so they are kept fully informed. Governors have a standing invitation to attend school assemblies and major acts of collective worship and they are regular visitors to the school and they always receive a warm welcome.