

# POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION

## De La Salle College, Belfast

All boys', maintained, non-grammar, 11-18 school,  
DE Ref No (123-0182)

### Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2022



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## Follow-up to the inspection of De La Salle College, Belfast, BT11 8LT (123-0182)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of De La Salle College, Belfast in [October 2018](#). Owing to action short of strike by the teaching unions, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the significant areas for improvement had been addressed, namely to:

- improve the quality of planning, teaching and assessment, including in the discrete provision for English, mathematics and modern languages;
- review and improve the curriculum offer and access to better meet the abilities, interests and career aspirations of the pupils;
- review and clarify the roles and responsibilities of all post holders to better align with school development planning, support more effectively staff development needs and develop more robust self-evaluation practices;
- develop appropriate and effective lines of communication in all aspects of the work of the school, and to commit fully to the development of an ethos that values openness, transparency, mutual respect and consultation; and
- improve the effectiveness of strategic leadership at all levels at leading and bringing about school improvement.

Consequently in 2018, there remained a need for De La Salle College to address urgently the significant areas for improvement. The Department of Education made the decision that the school remained in the Formal Intervention Process.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received external support from the Education Authority (EA) for the alignment of curriculum and careers provision at key transition points and for the continued development of pedagogy. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the EA have also provided support for the continued development of strategic leadership and management, including for members of the board of governors.

The school's development plan and action plans were adjusted appropriately in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in June 2021 and a second follow-up inspection in May 2022.

Over the same period, key actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- The school enrolment has decreased from 929 in 2018 to 771 currently. Over the same period, the number of newcomer children has increased from 9 to 29 and the proportion of pupils with a statement of educational need has increased from 9% to 11.2%.
- The EA approved two temporary autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) classes at key stage (KS) 3 staffed by two specialist ASD teachers and three classroom assistants. An EA approved temporary Learning Support Class for KS3 pupils was established in September 2021 with five year 8 pupils currently attending.
- Currently two members of the senior leadership team are seconded to the EA. Three senior leaders have been appointed in an acting capacity, which includes a new senior leader position with responsibility for middle leadership. Five new roles across senior and middle leadership have been established and defined.
- All governor positions have been filled on a permanent basis.
- Achieving consistency in the quality of learning and teaching has been prioritised across the school.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken within the school, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

## Key findings

Fifteen percent of the parents responded to the questionnaire (as part of the second follow-up inspection, there was an opportunity for parents and staff to complete a confidential online questionnaire), with 42% (45) of them providing additional written comments. A majority of the parents are content with their child's pastoral and learning experiences at the school. A significant minority expressed concerns including communication issues, stability of staffing and insufficient homework. Fifty-two percent (90) of the staff responded to the confidential online questionnaire. Almost all of the staff acknowledged that they had participated in staff training for child protection and safeguarding. A significant minority of staff provided written comments, with most recognising that staff are working hard to support the academic and pastoral needs of the pupils and the school improvement agenda. Just over three-fifths of the staff, who provided written comments, raised concerns around aspects of: curricular provision, staffing matters, behaviour management, communication and governance. Any issues raised in the parent and staff questionnaires were discussed with the principal and governors.

The outcomes for learners remains an important area for improvement.

In most of the lessons observed, the pupils were motivated, engaged actively and worked well in pairs or small groups. When given the opportunity, most contributed well to classroom discussions and offered opinions confidently. The pupils are positively disposed to learning and have great pride in their school and its role in the community. In a minority of lessons, there were low levels of disengagement and distraction.

The school now uses a range of internal data more effectively, including pastoral and academic information, to track pupil progress across the curriculum and inform the departments' planning to bring about more sustained improvement in outcomes. Performance data and pastoral information is used to identify underachievement and initiate appropriate interventions in order to improve pupil engagement and outcomes. The school acknowledges that its internal data shows that the outcomes for pupils at post-16 level require further improvement and can evidence that it is being addressed.

The quality of provision has improved and the remaining important areas for improvement are being addressed.

The planning, teaching and assessment for successful learning have improved; most of the lessons observed were effective in promoting successful learning. In the best practice, the pupils were well settled, worked well together and responded well to the teacher questioning. In the less effective practice, there were occasions of low-level disruption which impacted negatively on the quality and pace of the learning. The pupils would benefit from more consistent, good quality feedback together with regular marking for improvement.

Achieving consistency in the quality of learning and teaching has been prioritised across the school; senior leaders have conducted pupil pursuits during 2021-22 and provided summative feedback to staff.

Care and welfare impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. Throughout the school, there is a clear commitment to promoting a culture of care and support for one another. The pupils who met with inspectors spoke of the very positive working relationships at all levels across the school. They reported that they appreciate the support of their teachers and other staff and that they enjoy their learning, particularly practical activities and collaborative work. A small number of the pupils expressed concern about how well some teachers manage behaviour in the classroom. All of the pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They enjoy taking part in a range of extra-curricular activities and would appreciate further opportunities to provide feedback about their learning experiences.

The quality of provision for English and modern languages including the planning, teaching and assessment has improved and is now good. The quality of teaching in all of the Irish and Spanish lessons and in most of the English lessons observed was effective in promoting successful learning.

The quality of provision in mathematics including planning, teaching and assessment has improved, but important areas for improvement remain and need to be addressed. There is improvement in the consistency and quality of planning for learning; however, more work is required to implement further the learning and teaching strategies into effective classroom practice. The school is addressing the need to co-ordinate more effectively the monitoring and evaluation of the numeracy provision across the curriculum.

The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) remains as an important area for improvement. A core careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) team is now in place. There has been an appropriate broadening of the KS4 curriculum. Qualitative and quantitative data is now being analysed to better inform career pathways and curriculum offer and help create a foundation for better monitoring. While the post-16 entry policy has been reviewed, the lack of appropriate progression pathways for some pupils at sixth form is a concern and needs to be addressed.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management have improved, and leadership teams, at all levels, are addressing the remaining important areas for improvement.

Significant capacity building has taken place through the support work of CCMS and the EA around professional development for leadership at all levels. The senior and middle leadership teams have benefitted from this professional learning and are now in a better position to move forward more confidently with their school improvement work. The senior and middle leadership has taken good steps forward in communicating and consulting with stakeholders on all aspects of the work of the school. It will be important that they continue to prioritise and consolidate this work.

The senior and middle leaders are promoting greater transparency and positivity in the working environment. They are committed, and are working more effectively together to develop further the capacity across the school in embedding more robust and reliable self-evaluation processes. In going forward, this work needs to be securely and consistently implemented to ensure further improvement.

Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have a good range of complementary skills and carry out their roles conscientiously; they are committed to, and involved with, the life and the work of the school and its community. There are governor subcommittees who meet regularly with a range of middle and senior leaders to provide appropriate support and challenge.

## Overall effectiveness

De La Salle College needs to continue to address remaining important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The follow-up inspection has identified the following key areas for improvement:

- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum being offered at KS4 and post-16;

- the quality of leadership and management at all levels in order to sharpen the action planning processes to lead to further improvements in the pupils' learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum; and
- outcomes for pupils, including wider skills, capabilities, and dispositions across the curriculum.

The ETI will monitor through district inspection activity the schools progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The ETI will conduct a further follow-up inspection in 12-18 months.

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