

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566862  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
rcowley@cfbt.com



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Mrs Robinson  
Headteacher  
Carlton Bolling College  
Undercliffe Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD3 0DU

Dear Mrs Robinson

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Carlton Bolling College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Peter McKay and Andrew Swallow, additional inspectors and I inspected your college on 13 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. We also welcomed the opportunity to talk with the staff and students and an external consultant.

Over 90% of the college's students are of minority ethnic heritage with approximately two thirds of students being of Pakistani heritage. A small minority of students across the range of ethnic groups within the college is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Since the previous inspection the number of students on roll has risen to 1500. This is largely accounted for by an increase of around a third in the number of students who are staying on to study in the sixth form. A comprehensive restructure of teaching and support staff has taken place. The college's leadership team has been reviewed and capacity expanded, forming a strong platform for improvement. The college has recently taken over occupancy of an adjoining building that previously served as a 'City Learning Centre'.

As a result of the inspection on 20 May 2010, the college was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the college has made satisfactory progress in making improvement and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students enter the college with a wide range of abilities. Reading and writing skills are often well below those expected at their age, and this remains a significant limiting factor for their attainment overall. College data and recent examination results show that the strategies being implemented to raise attainment and ensure that all students make better progress are improving outcomes for students. Consequently some strongly improving trends are seen throughout the college. For example, in the data for the 2010-11 academic year, the

September 2011



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proportion of Year 11 students who made the expected progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics and science rose. The proportion of Year 11 students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics at 43%, was significantly lower than the national average but exceeded the floor standard. The rate of improvement on this key performance measure has been double that seen nationally, indicating that the actions being taken are effectively closing the gap between the students' performance and their peers. Similarly, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A\* to C or equivalent qualifications rose from 50% and significantly below national expectations in 2009, to 86% and well above the national figure in 2011. Within this overall picture of improvement some variation remains. For example, White British boys and School Action Plus students do not achieve as well as their peers in the college or nationally. Attainment in English literature and one of the specialist subjects, science is above that found nationally while in most of the other subjects it is below that seen nationally. Similarly in the sixth form, students' attainment in vocational qualifications is above that found nationally but is below that usually seen in academic courses at both AS and A2 level. College leaders are implementing appropriate strategies to tackle these differences.

Students' generally good behaviour makes a positive contribution to their learning in lessons. Attendance has improved from a low of nearly 90% last year to 93.5% currently. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has reduced considerably but remains high when compared with most schools. Appropriate strategies are in place to further improve attendance. There are promising signs that actions such as the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher with responsibility for inclusion, and revisions to the curriculum are beginning to have an impact. Those students who have been most difficult to engage in learning; most notably White British boys explained very clearly to inspectors the positive difference these changes are beginning to have on their attitudes to learning.

There are also signs that interventions such as the nurture group are improving students' learning and the development of their literacy skills. The college's own reliable monitoring shows that the quality of teaching is improving as a result of the implementation of well-targeted actions and development activities. There are some examples of good practice being developed and shared. However, many initiatives have yet to become routinely embedded throughout the college. Not all teachers are using assessment information well enough to plan and deliver interesting lessons that are well matched to students' learning needs. Consequently, in the lessons observed, students made satisfactory rather than good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Similarly, while students are aware of their learning targets, teachers' feedback, though improving, remains variable. Opportunities for students to assess their own and each other's progress and engage in productive discussion about their work are frequently missed.

College leaders have generated a palpable drive for improvement and taken carefully considered steps to ensure that other staff have moved with them. This has generated a strong sense of purposeful action throughout the college. The recruitment of additional leaders has increased the college's capacity for further improvement substantially. A comprehensive and shrewd review of leadership has resulted in more effective delegation

and distribution of decision-making and clearer lines of responsibility. Data and assessment information are being used more effectively to hold leaders more closely to account on the academic learning for which they are responsible. Strategies to monitor progress and manage performance are proving highly effective in driving improvements.

Leaders know their college well and are clear about the future actions needed. This is because they review and evaluate their actions rigorously and honestly. This results in improvement plans that are sharply focused with clear, measurable success criteria and a college that is demonstrably improving provision and outcomes for its students. Safeguarding and child protection procedures meet current requirements. Support from external agencies, such as the Bradford Partnership of secondary headteachers has been good, effectively helping the headteacher to implement the actions needed to tackle the areas for improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your college. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Raise attainment and ensure that all students make good progress, particularly during Key Stage 3 by:
  - ensuring that teachers in all subjects make a strong contribution to the development of students’ literacy skills and their ability to be effective independent learners
  - refining the Key Stage 3 curriculum so that it meets students’ needs well
  - making consistently effective use of assessment information to plan and deliver lessons that are well matched to students’ learning needs
  - ensuring that students know what they need to do to improve through opportunities to assess their own progress and effective feedback from teachers
  - rapidly reducing the variation in the quality of teaching across the school
  - improving attendance.