

Carmel College, A Catholic Academy

The Headlands, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 8RW

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students' outstanding progress and high achievement are driven by the college's aspirational target-setting. Ensuring success for every student is at the heart of the college's work.
- Standards have been significantly above the national average since the previous inspection. All groups of students make outstanding progress.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest levels in GCSE examinations has increased again this year and is significantly above the national average.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make exceptionally good progress to reach standards close to those of their peers.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary in classrooms and during social times, for example, in the busy dining halls. Movement around the college site is orderly and calm. Staff and students fully meet the Principal's aim of creating 'joyous corridors and purposeful classrooms.'
- Outstanding pastoral care ensures that students feel, and are safe and secure at the college.
- As the leading Teaching School in the region, the college draws well on its excellent pool of talent and expertise to inspire teachers to constantly improve their practice.
- High expectations and excellent relationships underpin the very high quality of teaching. Support staff make an invaluable contribution to the achievement and well-being of students.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Results at A-Level are significantly above national averages. The vast majority of students move on to their first choice universities, which include Oxbridge and universities in the prestigious Russell group.
- Excellent leadership and governance ensure that there is outstanding teaching and achievement and that high-quality expertise is well-established among middle leaders. The Principal recognises the need to continue this work to provide even higher-quality leadership in the college and across the Multi-Academy Trust.
- Governors hold the college robustly to account for its performance. Together with the Principal, they provide inspirational vision for the development of the college and educational provision within the Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons, including several jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with groups of students from Years 7, 9, 11 and 13 and members of the '1689 Group' (who raise awareness within the college of disability issues in society). They also talked informally with other students.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the Governing Body, including several directors of the Multi-Academy Trust.
- A wide range of documents was examined, including the college improvement plan, evidence about the work of the governing body, data relating to students' attainment and progress, and records of students' behaviour and attendance. One inspector examined the college's procedures for safeguarding students.
- Inspectors took account of 102 responses to the on-line questionnaire, (Parent View), and 126 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sophie Gillies	Additional Inspector
Jim Hall	Additional Inspector
Mark Simpson	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Carmel College is above the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average; so too is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below average; so too is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The college meets the government's current floor targets which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The college makes no use of off-site provision.
- Carmel College converted to become an academy college in November 2011. When its predecessor college Carmel Roman Catholic College was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- Carmel College is the founding school in the Carmel Education Trust which was formed in March 2013. The Trust comprises two secondary schools and three primary schools, all of which were Catholic Voluntary Aided schools. The Principal is also the chief executive officer of the Carmel Trust, and is a National Leader of Education.
- The college became a Teaching School in April 2012 and in this role is heavily involved in school-to-school support and improvement in both the primary and secondary phases.
- The college is a member of the Teacher Training Partnership providing school-based initial teacher training (ITT) through the School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and School Development programmes.
- Through its links with Sheffield Hallam University, the college is a Science Learning Partnership school, with the remit to lead professional development in science teaching across the region.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the college's role in improving the educational provision and outcomes for students within and beyond the Multi-Academy Trust schools across the region by:
 - inspiring even more staff to seek out leadership opportunities at all levels in the college
 - extending and developing the pioneering models of leadership used in the college so that a sizeable and flexible pool of leaders is well-trained for the future.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter the college with attainment that is above average overall. By the end of Year 11 their attainment is very high. For example, the college ranked fifth in national tables for its performance at five A* to C grades in GCSE including English and mathematics in 2012. In 2013 students' performance remained very high, with 90% of students achieving these grades.
- The most-able students consistently achieve above national averages at the highest grades. This was the case in 2013 in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, art, physical education, geography, the sciences, food technology and religious education.
- The proportion of students making expected progress, and the proportion making more than expected progress, are very high compared with national figures for every group of students, and are especially high for students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. For example, in English all students made expected progress in 2013 and 88% of students made better than expected progress in the subject.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is highly effective in ensuring that students who enter the college with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age receive swift, well-planned and effective support so they are able to fully access the curriculum successfully.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. Teaching is well-matched to their needs; the support to help them overcome individual barriers to learning is extensive, personalised and highly effective. The students in the '1689 Group', who champion awareness of disability in the college, spoke very highly of how they were helped to succeed, and develop pride in overcoming obstacles to their learning.
- Students supported through the pupil premium funding achieve exceptionally well, because funds are targeted very effectively so that their progress exceeds that of their peers. The gap between their attainment and that of other students in GCSE grades in English and mathematics amounts to about half a grade: B- against B for the whole cohort.
- Reading is actively promoted across the college so that students develop and refine their skills through frequent practice. High-level reading skills allow them to work independently at a very brisk rate.
- The college has not used early entry to the GCSE examination for mathematics; in English all students are entered together, usually in the autumn of Year 11 to allow time to study for the English literature examination in the summer of Year 11. In both subjects, attainment and progress are significantly higher than the national average for all groups of students, including the most-able.
- Outstanding provision in the sixth form ensures that students thrive and achieve very highly. Enrichment activities, and opportunities to take a lead in college societies and events, such as even assuming the role of elves in the forthcoming Christmas party for younger children, develop students' sense of service and their confidence to take the initiative. Students who move into the sixth form from other institutions make excellent progress because of the well-planned induction and assiduous monitoring of their well-being as they integrate with new friends and staff.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- High quality questioning is the hallmark of outstanding teaching. For example, Year 12 students made rapid progress in a biology lesson because of the teacher's challenging questions which developed their thinking and understanding and allowed them to learn from each other's detailed answers.
- Staff make regular checks on students' learning during lessons and take immediate action to give support or increase the challenge where necessary. Teachers skilfully adjust their questions

to match individual students' needs, while maintaining a steady build-up of new knowledge and understanding across the class. Students in a Year 7 science lesson responded extremely well to this approach, so that all were able to tackle tasks at their own level independently and make rapid progress.

- Teachers are equally robust in their marking and feedback on students' work. Meticulous marking, which carefully and succinctly advises on areas for improvement, is much appreciated by students, who acknowledge that it helps them to improve the quality of their work.
- The college sets aspirational targets for and with all students. These translate into high teacher expectations, an ambitious level of challenge, and success for all groups of students. Year 11 students, with a range of significant special educational needs, made excellent progress in a mathematics lesson, because of the teacher's well-planned activities. Students had just the right starting points to be able to succeed independently which accelerated their learning and spurred on their determination to succeed.
- Teachers make excellent use of their expert subject knowledge to present new information concisely and in interesting ways. This helps students become quickly absorbed in new learning. Many examples were seen of this, including one Year 12 geography lesson where students made rapid progress in their knowledge and understanding of the challenges facing Inuit Indians because of the teacher's skilful presentation of factual information. This allowed students to move quickly on to analysing the impact of events then to apply their literacy skills to explain cause and effect. This provided excellent preparation for a forthcoming essay on the topic.
- Teachers place much emphasis on developing students' independence. They expect students to work very hard throughout lessons, and students willingly rise to this challenge. This is a particularly strong feature of English lessons, where students are constantly challenged to provide explanations of characters' actions or writers' intentions. The outstanding success of teaching in the English department is based closely on this level of rigour.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- College records confirm the high quality of students' behaviour over time, and that there are no exclusions in this outstandingly inclusive college.
- Students demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They show exceptional persistence in their learning and an outstanding determination to succeed because they want to meet the high challenges set by teachers. Attendance is above average.
- Students are friendly towards each other, show excellent respect for staff and are welcoming and helpful to visitors.
- Students willingly seize opportunities to contribute to their own and other communities. For example, students in the 1689 Group raised funds to buy a wheelchair so that other students could experience the difficulties of limited mobility and empathise with the restrictions a disability imposes for those needing to use a wheelchair.
- Students feel safe in college because of the excellent pastoral care they receive. They are taught to assess risks to their well-being and have a mature understanding of e-safety. They have a detailed understanding of the different types of bullying, including prejudiced-based and cyber-bullying. They are adamant that bullying is not an issue in the college and the vast majority of their parents agree.
- Students whose circumstances could put them at risk of becoming vulnerable are supported exceptionally well in the Emmaus centre, which provides both immediate, and longer-term support to help students deal with their difficulties. The excellent collaboration between mentors, form tutors and heads of year groups provides sustained and effective support for students and their families. Highly structured systems and close links with parents ensure that vital information about students is shared promptly, so that they receive consistent and appropriate support to achieve as well as others.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal, Chair of Directors, Directors of the College and governors share an exceptional vision for its development and provide outstanding leadership to achieve this aim. Their uncompromising ambition to get the best for and from students is unanimously shared by staff.
- Senior leaders develop an excellent ethos, which inspires middle leaders and aspiring staff through its openness, the opportunities provided and an unrelenting drive for improvement. This results in high quality and ambitious leadership of subjects and pastoral provision, which in turn provides a model of excellence from which younger and less experienced staff can learn.
- Senior leaders are sharply aware of the need to develop the next generation of senior and middle leaders to further develop the college and its family of schools. They provide a wide range of pathways for staff to develop their leadership skills. This approach is central to the rapid rate of improvement that the college maintains year on year and is one that senior leaders acknowledge needs constant development if it is to stay in the forefront of educational innovation.
- The Principal, Head of Standards for the Trust and the senior leadership's outstanding management of progress data ensure that information is readily available to staff and is used effectively by teachers, subject leaders and pastoral leaders. These highly effective systems ensure that students' achievement and the college's promotion of equal opportunities are outstanding.
- The management of teachers' performance is robust and there is a good balance of support and challenge. Training programmes are excellent. The programme of induction and training for the many newly qualified staff who join each year is robust, ensuring that new staff achieve the college's very high expectations for the quality of their teaching.
- The dynamic curriculum is reviewed regularly for its effectiveness in helping students to achieve their best. The strong emphasis on using literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects reinforces these crucial skills and is a key factor in students' high attainment at Key Stage 4 and post-16.
- Extra-curricular activities are many, diverse and much valued by students of all ages. These rich experiences, together with regular opportunities for reflection and service to others, contribute exceptionally well to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The college provides authoritative advice and guidance for students at regular intervals as they move through the college. This ensures that students can make fully informed decisions about progression routes and that their qualification choices match their aspirations and interests.
- The college draws on expertise within its governing body and board of directors for support and challenge. Leaders are remarkably skilled, innovative and resourceful and are used as a training resource within the region.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Directors and governors show an exceptional commitment to the college's ambitious programmes for improvement. They are extremely knowledgeable about the work of the college, for example, about the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed, so are able to challenge it robustly over any possible variations in performance. They ensure that funding is judiciously allocated and that the college gets good value from its spending decisions, such as those relating to pupil premium funds. Directors and governors are rigorous in their management of the Principal's performance and are closely involved in agreeing the salary progression of teaching staff and its link to teacher performance. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that students and staff are safe on this exceptionally well-maintained site.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137622
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	426018

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,214
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	271
Appropriate authority	The Directors of Carmel Education Trust
Chair	Cyndi Hughes
Principal	Maura Regan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01325 254525
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