

Inspection of an outstanding school: Carlton Bolling

Undercliffe Lane, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD3 0DU

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Carlton Bolling continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Excellence for all' is woven through every aspect of life at Carlton Bolling. Pupils are valued as individuals. Every pupil who inspectors spoke with described how happy they were to attend this school. Expectations and aspirations for pupils are high. Leaders ensure that all pupils get the help they need to meet the high aspirations they have for them.

Behaviour in the school is exemplary. Pupils are respectful of each other. The relationships between adults and pupils are incredibly warm. Pupils feel cared for and would not hesitate to speak to teachers with any concerns. Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident and outgoing. The school is a caring, safe environment.

The 'Carlton Edge' programme ensures that pupils have access to a rich array of opportunities. Many pupils spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their visits to universities. A charity fundraising event, organised and run by pupils, was ongoing during the inspection. Pupils were eager to tell inspectors about the success of this work and the aims of the project. A highly effective and rich reading programme ensures that pupils read regularly. This programme is used to develop strong cultural knowledge in pupils.

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

The curriculum at Carlton Bolling is highly ambitious and superbly taught. 'Everyone belongs' is the mantra which energises the work of all members of staff.

The broad, rich curriculum is underpinned by an incredibly strong reading programme. Leaders identify the weakest readers and support them through targeted phonics intervention. All pupils have access to high-quality reading texts. There is a strong focus, across all subjects, on 'unlocking vocabulary'. The success of this work is evident when speaking to pupils. Pupils are confident, articulate and sophisticated in their use of language. Pupils are taught to debate current affairs and can challenge the views of others confidently and respectfully.

The design of the curriculum ensures that pupils build sophisticated knowledge over time. The constant focus on revisiting key information means pupils recall knowledge in detail and depth. For example, in English, pupils make conceptual links between Shakespeare texts about ideas of power and patriarchy. In art and design, pupils can connect the approaches and techniques they use to the work they have undertaken in the study of artists. The number of pupils studying the EBacc suite of qualifications is rising rapidly.

The curriculum is consistently well taught across school. Training for teachers is closely linked to aims of the curriculum. Consequently, staff have a very strong understanding of their role in bringing about 'excellence for all'. For example, information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is shared with all staff. Staff make highly effective use of this in the planning and organisation of lessons. Pupils with SEND are well supported through tailored groupings and adaptations of the curriculum.

Some pupils access the 'Alternative Learning Provision' (ALP) on the school site. As a result, there is currently no use of external alternative provision. The pupils in the ALP access a well-designed curriculum tailored to their specific needs.

Behaviour around the school is superb. In lessons, pupils are focused and enjoy lessons. Relationships between teachers and pupils are rooted in respect. Lessons run smoothly. Pupils want to share their ideas and are fully committed to engaging with the activities that teachers plan. Conversations between adults and pupils during social times further develop pupils' knowledge of the taught curriculum and current affairs. Pupils enjoy being at school and enjoy spending time with each other and their teachers. A culture of respect is deeply embedded across the school.

Leaders have a strong, strategic focus on pupils' development beyond the academic. The 'Carlton Edge' programme is well embedded and understood by all pupils and staff. This programme provides a wide set of extra-curricular experiences which are responsive to pupils' needs. For example, leaders have organised clubs before school as some pupils cannot attend after school. Experiences such as theatre visits and other trips are fully funded by the school. Pupils develop leadership skills through charity work and service in the community. Pupils actively seek out and embrace the chance to be involved in the 'Carlton Edge' programme. Subject leaders ensure that their curriculum is closely linked to the school's careers programme. Pupils' aspirations are heightened as a result of this work.

Trustees, rightly, are proud of the work that leaders have done. The vision of the school underpins the challenge that trustees provide to leaders. They know the school well and receive clear information, including about staff well-being. Records of conversations that trustees have with staff, in addition to regular staff surveys, demonstrate that staff feel proud to work at Carlton Bolling. Leaders are approachable and responsive when staff raise issues. Assessment systems, for example, have recently been adapted to reduce staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Records around safeguarding are thorough. There is a large safeguarding team. Leaders take timely actions and work with external agencies to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Staff receive regular updates and training about safeguarding. As a result, there is a strong understanding of the risks that pupils face. Adults know how to report concerns so that children are kept safe.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They know that they can speak to adults in the school if they are worried about anything.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Carlton Bolling College, to be outstanding in October 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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

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| Unique reference number | 147100 |
| Local authority | Bradford |
| Inspection number | 10255759 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,624 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Gareth Logan |
| Headteacher | Mohammed Azum |
| Website | www.carltonbolling.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Carlton Bolling converted to become an academy school in June 2019. When its predecessor school, Carlton Bolling College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- Since the inspection of the predecessor school, Carlton Bolling College, in 2017, the headteacher and much of the senior leadership team have changed. The headteacher at the time of the predecessor school's inspection is now the chief executive officer of the Carlton Academy Trust.
- The sixth-form provision, which was part of the predecessor school, Carlton Bolling College, no longer operates. The school now caters for pupils from 11 to 16.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.
- The school's ALP provision is based a very short distance from the main school site and operates under the same registration as the school. A small number of pupils attend this provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, executive headteacher and other senior leaders. They also spoke with the chief executive officer of the Carlton Academy Trust and a group of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, art and design, computing and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders for the school reading programme, visited lessons where the reading programme was being delivered and visited phonics lessons.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised records relating to safeguarding and spoke to leaders responsible for safeguarding. They also spoke with adults and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for attendance. They visited the school's alternative learning provision and behaviour intervention room.
- Inspectors spoke with the special educational needs coordinator for the trust and with leaders responsible for personal development and careers provision.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff, including early career teachers.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils both formally and informally and observed social times.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through survey responses, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Matthew Vellensworth, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Gordon Watts | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jonathan Ferstenberg | Ofsted Inspector |

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