



# Carmel Roman Catholic Technology College

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114324  
**LEA** Darlington  
**Inspection number** 279364  
**Inspection dates** 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Heather Richardson HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	The Headlands
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Darlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19		County Durham, DL3 8RW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 254525
<b>Number on roll</b>	1042	<b>Fax number</b>	01325 254335
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Alan Mitchell
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 December 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James O'Neill

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 279364
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Carmel RC Technology College is a popular college which serves the Catholic community of Darlington and the surrounding area. Almost a third of its students are from other Christian denominations. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The college is slightly larger than average, with over a thousand students aged between 11 and 19. The proportion of students who are eligible for a free school meal is much lower than average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of students from a minority ethnic heritage is very low. The college has specialist status for technology and a second specialism in vocational education has recently been awarded.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Carmel RC Technology College is a good college with several outstanding features. It is, rightly, highly regarded by its students and parents and enjoys a good reputation in the community and beyond. Its Christian ethos permeates the life of the college and is reflected especially in the high quality care and support which is provided for students. As a result, students' personal development is outstanding and they generally make good progress in their learning. Students achieve standards which are above average in most subjects. The college's view of itself is broadly accurate and the main strengths and areas for development are identified accurately but, in some key areas, the college's self-evaluation is generous. The college has focused attention on improving teaching and learning, with notable success, but there is the potential to make them better still. There are clear systems to monitor performance and evaluate the impact of the college's work but there is scope for greater rigour to remove inconsistencies. The college has made good progress since the previous inspection and there is clear capacity for further improvement. The college provides good value for money.

not applicable

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

This is good and has some outstanding features. Standards are above average. The overwhelming majority of students complete their courses and pass rates are high. Students make good progress and achieve well compared with their starting points and capabilities. They achieve particularly well in mathematics, English literature and physics.

Students, especially those with learning difficulties, are very positive about the outstanding support and guidance they receive. Their progress is carefully monitored and they are very appreciative of individual tutorials which help them to assess how well they are doing and to set future targets. A very successful personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme provides students with good advice about future courses and career choices and ensures that they are well prepared for the world of work. Teaching and learning are good and students are increasingly encouraged to think for themselves and learn independently. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding. The curriculum meets most students' needs well and the college is continually seeking to provide a wider range of vocational courses. Students feel that their opinions are listened to and that there is a real sense of community in their sixth form. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good, being both committed and enthusiastic. The sixth form provides good value for money.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Consolidate the improvements in teaching and learning in order to make these aspects outstanding.

- Refine the college's current systems for monitoring and evaluation to make them more rigorous in the pursuit of excellence.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. Standards at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2005. This represents good overall achievement at Key Stage 3 when account is taken of students' broadly average attainment on entry to the college. There is some variation in students' achievement between subjects. They achieve less well in science than in English and mathematics. The standards reached at the end of Year 11 in 2005 were well above average and an exceptionally high proportion of students gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE. Such standards were a significant improvement on those reached in 2004 and markedly above the targets for both 2005 and 2006. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades was also above average. The progress made by girls in 2005 was comparable to that of girls in similar schools nationally; boys' progress was significantly higher, a marked improvement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the few from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average and achievement is good.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development is outstanding throughout the college. Students enjoy college and are willing learners. Exemplary behaviour and very good relationships result in co-operation and diligence in lessons. Exclusions are infrequent and attendance is above average.

Students develop strong personal values and show empathy for global issues and others' misfortune, for example through the work of the excellent Fair Trade group and by raising money to support a school in Cambodia. They develop a healthy respect for other cultures through links with schools in a variety of countries. Students act responsibly in lessons where there are potential hazards. They are well-informed about risks associated with alcohol and drug abuse, as well as sex and relationships. The college's strong Catholic ethos contributes to their excellent understanding of a range of moral and social issues. They show good spiritual awareness. Students on the college council use the opportunities provided to influence the life and work of the college. Students appreciate the efforts made to induct them when they join the college and the support they receive to help them learn. They maintain a healthy lifestyle through high levels of participation in sport and a regard for healthy eating. Students are confident, socially aware and attain very good results. Their future employment prospects are enhanced by involvement in enterprise schemes.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in both the main college and the sixth form. This quality of teaching enables students to make good progress in their learning so that they achieve well in national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Since the previous inspection a much greater variety of teaching methods have been introduced as part of the college's priorities for improvement. These have been successful in maintaining students' interest, adding to their enjoyment of lessons and ensuring their concentration and effort. The best lessons are well planned, explanations are clear and students are encouraged to think for themselves and assess their own learning. Students have excellent relationships with their teachers and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of respect and trust. Students have sufficient homework to enable them to extend their learning and consolidate their skills. However, in a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is relatively slow. This is because teachers' introductions are too lengthy, planning is less detailed, or students are left to work on their own for too long. There is variable use of the technology available in classrooms to support teaching and learning. Most students' work is marked regularly and helpful comments ensure that students know how to improve their work but this good practice is not consistent across departments. Results of formal tests and assessments are collected systematically and used very well to track students' progress and plan their future learning. Students are gaining confidence as learners as they are increasingly engaged in setting and reviewing their own targets as part of this process.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The college's curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and reflects the college's specialism in the breadth of technology courses it provides. It also reflects the college's attempts to meet the needs of the local community, as well as providing students with a rich choice of options at Key Stage 4. Vocational courses have also broadened the choices available. There is good provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Additional time provided to improve students' weak literacy skills enables all students to obtain GCSE grades. The college has yet to develop fully its work-related curriculum and is seeking ways to improve the match between courses and individual need from 14 to 19. The curriculum in the sixth form is good. There is a good range of Advanced Level courses and a number of vocational courses from which students can choose. The college's very good provision of extra-curricular activities broadens students' understanding and enjoyment of their work. The activities enable some students to achieve regional and national recognition, for example, in sport. Pupils gain confidence through the opportunities to perform music and drama. At the time of the inspection the college was hosting an international conference of students and teachers, thus giving an added dimension to students' cultural development.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The college offers excellent care, guidance and support to students. Parents praise the arrangements which guide and support students very effectively, both personally and academically. Procedures for child protection, first aid and safety in college and on visits are robust. Students are well cared for and supported by tutors, heads of year and mentors who know them very well. Vulnerable students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make discernible progress. The Emmaus centre provides an excellent range of supportive activities for those students experiencing difficulties with their learning or their confidence. Students appreciate the way they are prepared for their futures. They benefit from excellent links with the wider community and through work experience and enterprise opportunities. Students appreciate the range of visiting speakers and the opportunity to take part in an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Underachieving students are identified and targeted to receive extra support to help them improve. There are very effective systems that monitor and record students' progress. This information is used to inform the regular academic mentoring days which are found to be extremely helpful by both students and their parents.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

This is good overall, with many outstanding features. The college is clearly focused on raising standards and on enabling students to develop into confident and considerate young people. The college's caring and inclusive ethos is strong and firmly rooted in its Catholic values. There has been continuous improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in teaching and learning. The quality of the college's work has been recognised in a range of external awards, including Chartermark and Sportsmark Gold. The headteacher and the senior leaders work well as a team to promote improvement. There has been a clear focus on developing greater coherence between the college's priorities for improvement. These draw together its academic and pastoral work to enhance the college as a learning community. The college has improved its procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation, and has made a determined effort to produce a fair appraisal of its work, but has rated itself generously in some aspects. Increasingly effective links between managers at all levels, especially in tracking students' progress, contribute to the development of the college's monitoring. However, as the college recognises, there is some unevenness in its performance, particularly the performance of students from year to year and between subjects. Although reducing, there are still some inconsistencies in teaching and learning. The revised monitoring systems have yet to become fully embedded and are not sufficiently rigorous. The governors show a high level of commitment and support the college well. They have well-established procedures to enable them to work efficiently and are developing their capacity to hold the college to account.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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To the students of

Carmel Roman Catholic Technology College

The Headlands

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DL3 8RW

15 March 2006

Dear Students

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we inspected your college. We were pleased that you and your parents and carers told us about the many things you like about the college. We were impressed by your behaviour in lessons and around the school. Your attendance is good. We noted how many of you take up the opportunities to take part in activities at lunchtime and after the college day, as well as how successful you have been in so many of them. It was good to have the opportunity to see the international conference you were hosting. We were also impressed by the many ways you show care and concern for others, including taking part in the pilgrimage to Lourdes, the fundraising for charity and support for Fair Trade. We enjoyed the Fair Trade chocolate!

We think that Carmel is a good college overall and some things are outstanding. In particular, we think that the care and support which teachers and other adults provide for you is exceptional. This includes the way in which teachers help you to set your own targets for improvement and check on how well you are doing. You will know that the GCSE results which last year's Year 11 students gained were exceptionally good, and much better than the previous year. We think that, overall, students at Carmel achieve well; this includes students in the Sixth Form. Your teachers are working hard to make lessons interesting and varied and this is helping you to make good progress.

We have asked your teachers to do two things to help the college to be even better. We have asked them to continue to improve lessons, and to improve the ways in the college checks to see how well it is doing.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Carmel RC Technology College and that you are successful.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson HMI

(on behalf of the inspection team)