

Carlton Bolling College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107413
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	287811
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1093
6th form	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Sunderland
Headteacher	Dr Nigel Jepson
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Undercliffe Lane Bradford West Yorkshire BD3 0DU
Telephone number	01274 633111
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Carlton Bolling College is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school for 1,402 students aged 11–18 of whom 309 are in the sixth form. The school is located in the Undercliffe area of Bradford approximately 1 mile outside the city centre. The area is recognised as having significant socio-economic deprivation and a high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the majority speak English as an additional language. The students' attainment on entry to the school is well below average and a higher than average number of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Carlton Bolling College was removed from special measures in December 2004. In October 2005 the headteacher was appointed as the executive headteacher of both Carlton Bolling and another local school. The partnership has resulted in Carlton Bolling College being recognised as a National Support School in October 2006. In September 2006 it acquired specialist college status for mathematics and computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Carlton Bolling College is an outstanding school with good sixth form provision. The school's mission of 'Achievement for All' now permeates the whole organisation and has been a key factor in driving its exceptional progress and improving achievement since the last inspection. A culture of high aspirations has been established which is subscribed to by staff and students alike. This is accompanied by a relentless pursuit of excellence and commitment to overcoming any areas of relative weakness.

Carlton Bolling is highly inclusive and is successfully removing barriers to achievement for a significant number of students who are at risk of underperforming. One group of students summed up the feelings of many by saying: 'We like this school because the teachers are very helpful and they encourage you to achieve as well as you can.'

The vast majority of students make outstanding progress through Years 7 to 11 and good progress in the sixth form compared to their exceptionally low starting points. Vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress with some making very good progress. Standards, although generally at or below national averages, continue to rise. The school recognises the need to continue to improve standards further across both key stages and is ambitious yet realistic in its approach to this.

The progress students make in their personal development and well-being is good. The school provides a safe learning environment and students demonstrate a good awareness of health and well-being. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and exclusions have fallen dramatically. Attendance continues to be a key area for improvement, although a wide range of strategies are in place to support students' attendance and it has improved marginally since the last inspection and is now just under that of similar schools.

Teaching and learning are good and assessment is used particularly well to motivate students and help them to realise their potential. Some lessons are too dominated by the teacher and do not effectively promote or develop students' ability to work more independently or think for themselves, limiting the progress of some.

A wide curriculum is offered across the school, including an increasing number of vocational programmes to meet students' needs and an effective alternative curriculum for more vulnerable students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The specialist status in mathematics and computing is in its early stages, but is already beginning to impact through the use of information and learning technologies (ILT) in lessons and in creating learning resources. Inspectors found the school's evaluation of 'good' care, guidance and support to be overly modest and judged this aspect as outstanding for all students, due to the excellent academic guidance which in turn has resulted in such impressive rates of progress by most students. The proportion of students who progress to further education and higher education or employment is high, supporting students' future economic well-being. The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school and recognise its improving status. A minority of parents feel the school could take better account of parental views.

Leadership of the school is strong and inspirational. Management of the sixth form is good. Effective partnership working exists and has aided the school's transformation, along with a supportive governing body. Self-evaluation is used exceptionally well to identify underperformance and check on progress at all levels with challenging and often ambitious

targets being set and in many cases met or exceeded. Senior managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Resources are used exceptionally well and the school provides excellent value for money. The school has been energised since its removal from special measures and has demonstrated an impressive rate of improvement, with an outstanding capacity to improve its provision further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Provision in the sixth form is good and developing well through constant innovation, evaluation and revision. It is popular, very inclusive, and offers a comprehensive range of A level and vocational courses. The college has ample facilities needed for successful study, and benefits from numerous external links including those with the local consortium of schools and the adjacent City Learning Centre. Completion of courses is excellent, and virtually all students study for two or more years. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students benefit from close personal attention and excellent support, as staff guide them securely towards their chosen careers. Consequently, their progress is good although some examination results are below average. Management is good, with close attention paid to the organisation of provision to meet individuals' needs and career preferences. Self-evaluation is good, but has not as yet had the same impact in rapidly driving up achievement as seen in the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' attainment across all subjects and key stages.
- Improve students' attendance.
- Ensure all lessons effectively develop students' abilities to work more independently and think for themselves.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievements are outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form. Students enter the school with exceptionally low levels of attainment. Given these very low starting points, the vast majority of students make outstanding progress through both key stages. Good progress is made in the sixth form as students' progress is more variable between subjects than in the main school. The standards reached by students are broadly average, below average and in a few cases, well below average, across both key stages and the sixth form. However, standards are improving and have continued to rise over the last three years. The rate of improvement in students' GCSE results has improved considerably, with the percentage of students gaining an A* to C grade rising from 17% in 2003 to 44% in 2006 and is forecast to rise again in 2007. This strong improving trend in results is apparent across the school and for almost all groups of students, with an increasing number of students achieving the higher levels in national tests. All groups perform at least in line with expectations given their prior attainment, reflecting the school's commitment to inclusion. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress.

Progress is equally strong in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and across virtually all subjects, including vocational options. In Years 7 to 9 students make exceptionally good progress in mathematics and science, although achievements in English fell in 2006 with fewer students

progressing to higher levels than in previous years. The school has identified the reasons for this and effective actions have been taken. In Years 10 and 11, progress in English has continued to improve and is very good. Progress in mathematics has been consistently good. After a dip in mathematics results in 2006, standards have recovered through swift intervention. Sixth form students achieve particularly well at A level and in vocational subjects although AS level pass rates were more variable in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of students is good. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating and many adopt active lifestyles through wide ranging access to competitive sports and physical exercise. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and has recently been active in helping to redesign the school uniform and in increasing the availability of drinking water.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and this has had a clear impact on their recent high levels of progress and achievement. In addition, the number of external exclusions from the school has dramatically reduced due to improved student engagement in the classroom and a more consistent application of the behaviour management strategy. The school strongly promotes high attendance and punctuality and attendance levels are slowly improving, but are still a key challenge for the school. Since September the school has further improved security measures around the building and students report that this has helped create a safe learning environment.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Year group assemblies are utilised well to help students focus on reaching their individual potential both academically and from a personal development viewpoint. Students say that they very much enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities and older students make good use of work placement projects. Additionally, a wide range of opportunities are presented for students to undertake vocational courses and to attend Enterprise Days leading to the exploration of possible career paths.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and contributes to students' enjoyment and achievement.

There are good systems in place to monitor teaching and learning, and as a result, well targeted training to improve it further. For example, as a result of training for staff on assessment for learning and the regular monitoring of its use in lessons, this has become a significant strength of teaching across the school. Data on students' prior ability levels are used well to plan lessons. The regular use of levels and exam descriptors is also used well to help students assess their own work and to demonstrate how they can improve further.

Lessons are typically planned well with detailed consideration for students' varied needs and capabilities, and employ a range of learning activities that promote progress and enjoyment.

Teachers also make good use of questioning as well interactive whiteboards to develop and extend students' knowledge and understanding. Students behave well and many are keen to participate in discussions.

In the few cases where teaching is much less effective, students quickly lose attention due to too much teacher-led activity. In a minority of cases this contributes to boredom and some distracting behaviour that limits progress in learning.

However, the school has not been complacent. Work continues to further improve teaching and learning with opportunities for teachers to share effective practice with each other and to tackle weaker teaching where it exists.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's broad, relevant and innovative curriculum is thoughtfully planned and continuously revised. It meets statutory requirements and adds numerous extra learning opportunities to a busy 25 lesson week. The school's specialist status is reflected in well targeted mathematics courses and copious provision in information and communication technology. Carefully structured personal, social and health education includes citizenship and is complemented by religious education. In Key Stage 4 students enjoy a firmly guided choice of academic, technological and vocational options, enhanced by links with local agencies, schools and colleges. These offer a close match to students' abilities, aptitudes and post-16 aspirations. Many courses feature useful elements of enterprise, and work-related learning is prominent. The creation of a construction skills centre, for example, responds well to an urgent local need. Students with learning difficulties participate in all aspects of learning and others at risk of disaffection benefit from provision tailored to their needs. Many students benefit from sport, excursions and other extra-curricular activities complementing the timetabled curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support to students are outstanding. There is very inclusive provision for the broad range of students on roll and the welfare and support systems for vulnerable students and those with low self-esteem are excellent. Effective child protection systems are in place and safety checks on new staff and visitors meet with the latest national requirements. Health and safety, medical and accident reporting and recording systems are of a high quality. The transitional arrangements for students entering Year 7 are very well managed by the school and the majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel that their children are making good progress.

The provision for students' personal, social, health and citizenship education is good and significantly helps to underpin their personal development. The level of academic guidance and support to students is outstanding and includes regular individual tutor discussions which are very successfully aimed at maximising students' progress and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has been transformed since the last inspection by rapid and sustained improvement in standards and achievement, and by important advances in the quality of provision. It provides excellent value for money.

The executive headteacher has provided inspirational leadership throughout this period. With the first class support of senior leaders, a clear vision for the school has been established that focuses very successfully on raising achievement. The acquisition of specialist college status and the opening of the impressive construction centre bear witness to the school's ambition and to its determination to do all it can to provide the very best education for all of its students. Parents and students alike express their growing confidence in the school. This is reflected in its increased popularity, and entry to Year 7 is now oversubscribed. Governors provide effective support for the school, putting their experience, expertise and local knowledge to good use. The school's recent impressive record has also been built on the creation of effective staff teams. Staff are pulling together with a strong common purpose to ensure the success of the school and their morale is high. Consequently, the capacity for further improvement is also excellent.

Self-evaluation is robust and accurate. There is an excellent focus on the analysis and use of data on all aspects of school performance to inform decisions. Senior and middle leaders make a significant contribution to the school's accurate and incisive understanding of its strengths and where it needs to further improve.

The school has good links with a wide range of external agencies, schools and higher education institutions. These are used beneficially to extend opportunities for students and contribute to school improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspection team and I would like to thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit to Carlton Bolling College. We met some of you in student meetings, in the lessons we came to and a number of you introduced yourselves to us while we walked around the corridors. This letter is to give you a flavour of what we discovered during our two days in the school which I hope you will find helpful.

We found that a great number of you make excellent progress during your time from Year 7 through to Year 11. In Years 12 and 13 you make good progress in most subjects and many of you progress into further education. The standards of your work and your exam results are improving. We agree with you that many of your lessons are good and that you get excellent support when you need it. Your school has improved considerably over the last few years and your positive attitudes and willingness to learn have helped make this transformation. Your headteacher and the senior managers are doing an excellent job in making your school successful and they know what is needed to continue to get even better.

We suggested that the school needs to focus on improving the following three areas:

- to continue to improve your standards of your work and exam results so that you are all achieving as well as you possibly can in all subjects
- to improve some of your attendance
- to make sure that in all lessons you are given the chance and the skills to work and learn more by yourself. This will help some of you to make even better progress.

You of course can help the school to achieve this by concentrating and working as hard as you can in all lessons and attending regularly.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all every success for the future.