

Inspection of Carmel College

The Headlands, Darlington, County Durham DL3 8RW

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The principal of this school is Melanie Kane. This school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stuart McGhee, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne Coates.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2013. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's Catholic ethos and values are at the heart of all that the school does. The school celebrates pupils' different backgrounds. This is a welcoming school with a strong spirit of community. Pupils show respect and kindness to all. They form trusting relationships with staff. The school values pupils for who they are. It goes beyond the expected to help every pupil succeed and live life to the full. Pupils flourish here.

The school has the highest of aspirations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils benefit from the school's broad and ambitious curriculum and excellent teaching. They show a real interest in their learning and achieve highly.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, they focus on their work and listen intently to their teachers. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour. They also show genuine care and consideration for each other.

The school provides pupils with an impressive enrichment programme. Pupils enjoy a diverse range of clubs and activities including sports, music and creative arts. Educational visits and events such as a culture festival enrich pupils' learning. Furthermore, pupils take on a wide range of leadership roles. Pupils make a significant contribution to school life and to the wider community.

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

The school has developed its curriculum with considerable expertise. The curriculum provides pupils with a deep and rich body of knowledge. Moreover, the school rigorously checks the impact of their curriculum on pupils' learning. This leads to changes that enrich the curriculum further and ensures that it continues to meet pupils' needs and interests. The curriculum is well-sequenced both within and across subjects. It builds pupils' knowledge and skills in a logical manner from key stage 3 to the sixth form. There is an appropriate balance between academic and practical subjects. Many pupils study for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). From key stage 4, pupils can also study vocational courses, including health and social care, child development and sport. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, training and employment.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It identifies pupils' needs with speed and precision. Teachers and other adults are skilful at meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. They achieve exceptionally well from their starting points.

Reading has high priority. The school identifies those pupils who are at an early stage of reading. It provides them with the extra support they need to become fluent and confident readers. The school promotes reading for pleasure and reading across the

curriculum. Pupils read often at school and develop a substantial vocabulary. The school also develops pupils' oracy. Pupils are articulate and confident speakers.

Teaching at the school is of high quality. Teachers revisit pupils' prior learning and build on that learning. They present new information with clarity and check pupils' understanding systematically. Teachers use questioning well to secure and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. In the sixth form, teachers generate rich discussion and debate. They develop students' independence and strengthen their subject knowledge through the 'super curriculum'. Pupils achieve high levels of attainment.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils meet the school's high expectations and show a commitment to school life. Sixth form students are role models for younger pupils. In lessons, pupils are attentive and show positive attitudes to their learning. They respond with willingness and confidence to teachers' questions. They work well, both on their own and with their peers.

The school's personal development programme is exceptional. It makes a significant contribution to the development of pupils' character. Pupils learn about important issues such as relationships and equality and diversity. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online and in the local community. Pupils have a deep and secure understanding of the protected characteristics and fundamental British values. The school's careers programme gives pupils detailed information and expert guidance. Pupils undertake meaningful work placements. This supports pupils to make well-informed choices about their next steps.

The school values staff and prioritises staff well-being and workload. Staff are highly motivated and enjoy working at the school. Trustees perform their statutory duties with appropriate rigour. Together with governors, they hold school leaders to account. Furthermore, the trust supports the school's continued development. It provides high quality staff training and additional leadership capacity.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137622
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10346427
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1372
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	297
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Yvonne Coates
CEO of the trust	Stuart McGhee
Principal	Melanie Kane
Website	www.carmel.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was part of the Carmel Education Trust. It has been part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust since January 2015.
- The school uses three registered providers of alternative provision.
- The school is a Roman Catholic school in the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in December 2019. Section 48 inspections were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and restarted in September 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection is due by December 2027.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the principal, vice principals, the chief executive officer of the trust and other trust leaders. They also met with the chair of the board of trustees, members of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body and members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography, art and design, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in modern foreign languages and science. They looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff, and to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector

Jamie Lawler

Jayne Gaunt

Vicky Callaghan

Paul Bell

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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