



Carmel College – a Catholic Academy

The Headlands, Darlington, DL3 8RW

School Unique Reference Number: **137622**

Inspection dates:	12 – 13 November 2014
Lead inspector:	Barry Parkin
Team inspector:	Mark Henderson

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Catholic Life:		Outstanding	1
Collective Worship:		Outstanding	1
Religious Education:		Outstanding	1

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Carmel College – a Catholic Academy is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- The overall effectiveness of the college is outstanding. The mission of the college is lived out every day in an atmosphere of mutual respect. High standards are expected in all areas of college life. The development of the Catholic Life of the school is a priority for leaders. Pupils are given rich opportunities to develop their potential and they are supported in their faith journey through prayer and liturgy. Both attainment and progress in Religious Education are high and pupils benefit from outstanding teaching for a large majority of the time.
- The Catholic Life of the college is outstanding. All members of the community are valued as unique individuals. Pupils and staff alike are aware of the mission statement and there is a strong sense of witness to gospel values. The college is a happy place where joy is the intended norm. Rich experiences are on offer for pupils and staff are well supported in the development of Catholic Life through ongoing training. The care of individuals is paramount and this is evidenced in a well-planned pastoral programme and through provision offered in the Emmaus Centre.

- Collective Worship is outstanding. Morning prayer is interactive and lively as well as being very reverent. Pupils respond actively to prayer of varying types and they are involved in the planning of Mass and other liturgies. Participation levels are high. Senior leaders show their commitment to Collective Worship on a daily basis and are true witnesses. Resources produced by the two chaplains are of a very high standard and good use is made of information technology and music. Effective systems of monitoring are in place to inform future planning. Good support is available to staff in terms of further training.
- The quality of Religious Education is outstanding. Pupils enjoy Religious Education and standards of achievement are high in every key stage. Teaching is frequently outstanding and never less than good. The department is very well led and well-resourced by an outstanding leader and her assistant. A shared vision which aims for excellence is evident in the department. High level monitoring involving the senior team and governors ensures that high standards of teaching and learning are maintained. Assessment is rigorous and creative and pupils benefit from, and value, the swift and thorough marking of their work.

FULL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Carmel College is an above average sized Catholic academy. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average as is the proportion eligible for the pupil premium. Numbers of pupils supported through school action, school action plus and through statements of special educational needs is below average. Carmel converted to an academy in November 2011 and in March 2013 founded the Carmel Educational Trust comprising two secondary schools and three primary schools. The principal is the chief executive of the trust and a national leader in education. The college became a teaching school in April 2012. Additionally, the college leads the teacher training partnership which provides teacher training (ITT) through the school centred initial teacher training (SCITT) and school development programmes. The college is also a member of the Hexham and Newcastle Catholic partnership of schools.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Ensure the creative work done to redevelop and deliver the general Religious Education programme in the sixth form continues to meet the needs of the students and the Bishops' Conference requirements by:
 - keeping this provision under review in order to ensure that all elements of it are appropriately labelled;
 - ensuring staff teaching general Religious Education receive appropriate training as required, to maintain depth in terms of subject knowledge.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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- The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.
- The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The school mission statement provides the direction which enables all pupils to embrace what is on offer in this inclusive college which aims to ensure that students will have life in abundance. Undeniably, there is a place in the heart of Carmel College for people of any creed or culture.
- All members of the college, speak with spirit and love about how they benefit from and value belonging to this college.
- Senior staff have embedded a strong culture of mutual respect which is a hallmark of this loving community. This is evidenced in the smallest of ways such as in the way everyone holds doors for each other, but these minor indicators speak volumes. Calmness is the hallmark of the college and behaviour is exemplary.
- Carmel College is a happy place and deliberately so. The chief executive officer (CEO) is relentless in her determination that there is 'joy on the corridors and purposeful learning in classrooms' and this is so.
- Vast opportunities for enrichment activities are on offer, but the college also offers a quiet haven for those who need care and calm at difficult points in their lives. Pupils blossom as they unfold new chapters in their lives. They have ready access to retreats and pilgrimages. Pupils lead numerous fund raising activities and challenges such as Mary's Meal and CAFOD. Pupils swiftly express their desire to support international crises and leaders affirm their support.
- A welcoming atmosphere permeates the college. Newcomers are supported by buddies and within days feel part of the community. All pupils speak fondly of the access they have to staff and appreciate the open door policy that exists right the way up to the CEO. This sense of family trust is a bedrock of this college.
- A well written pastoral programme is underpinned by the Catholic values that run through every aspect of college life. Pupils enjoy an engagement with topical issues and they know that they can express their views in an atmosphere of trust.

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- The CEO and head of school are unwavering in their determination to ensure that pupils receive the very best experiences. Leadership strives relentlessly to ensure that 'in every lesson, every day, that pupils receive the very best education.' Thus, the staff are charged with the responsibility to provide the same education for Carmel pupils

that they would wish for their own families.

- The CEO makes no secret of her determination to provide a Catholic witness to her staff and an equal determination that this should be translated to pupils. Carmel is a community of forgiveness and restorative justice is the norm. Pupils are seen as unique individuals who need individual solutions to meet their needs. This is offered by all staff and where necessary in the Emmaus centre.
- Carmel College is proud of its religious identity. Commissioned art work in the entrance celebrates the Northern Catholic Heritage and religious signs and symbols throughout the building remind pupils of the core principles of Catholic Life.
- Calmness pervades the corridors; a lack of bells promotes tranquillity which is acknowledged by visitors. A peaceful, harmonious feel is present everywhere and this supports purposeful learning in the classrooms and success for pupils.
- Clear guidelines for staff on all aspects of school life not only exist, but are revisited with staff. A staff 'policy quiz' provides a unique way to ensure policies are translated into practice in a fun way.
- Catholic Life is enhanced by continual professional development (CPD) programmes for staff. A quality induction programme ensures a smooth transition into the college. A resourceful, and highly committed chaplaincy team provide a wealth of resources for staff to use. Their individual witness to the faith is recognised by staff. A rich 'Spiritual Depth' programme provides a unique opportunity for staff to deepen their understanding of the mission of this Catholic college.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.

- All senior staff humbly acknowledge the great responsibility they have to promote the provision for Catholic Life. Senior staff are recognised as witnesses to gospel values on a daily basis. Leaders are keen to support the charitable responsibility of the college and this was evident when the CEO willingly took part in the 'ice bucket challenge'.
- Staff accept the high expectations demanded of them but at the same time acknowledge the care offered to them in return. This can be seen regularly through 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' but also on individual occasions when they or their families might experience loss or hardship.
- The CEO and senior staff strive for excellence. There is no place for second best at Carmel; the achievement of individual excellence for the sake of the individual pupil is an everyday and relentless expectation acknowledged by staff.
- Carmel is an outward facing college thus ambition for pupil success goes far beyond the confines of the college with the development of the multi academy trust. Expertise is shared to give other pupils the advantages Carmel pupils enjoy.
- Additionally, as a provider of initial teacher training, the college demonstrates a responsibility towards future generations of teachers and pupils.
- Thoughtful review and evaluation have long been strengths in this successful college. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Catholic Life is evaluated rigorously. Evaluative reports on Catholic Life are discussed by the senior team and governors and new priorities set.
- Governors speak with an astute confidence about their knowledge of all aspects of college life. They know their college well and are up to date. Governors acknowledge the academic success and spiritual strengths of the college. Governors have faith in the leadership of the college and as a result give their time and support without hesitation.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship is outstanding.

- Collective Worship is a very natural part of college life; it is interactive and lively. Pupils are happy to be part of what is on offer on a daily basis, during weekly Mass, at assemblies, and on other occasions linked to the liturgical year.
- End of year Masses are a highlight and reflect a strong sense of liturgy as well as deliberately hooking pupils in with a key awareness of the world in which they live. ‘Easter in the ordinary’ when pupils witnessed to their faith by doing ‘Stations of the Cross’ at lunch time is a mark of how at ease pupils are with their faith.
- Pupils are ready participants in prayer and show a great respect for an aspect of college life which beats like a heart through this community.
- Pupils are willingly involved in the planning of weekly school Masses led by school chaplains who demonstrate great depth in their commitment to their role.
- A sixth form ‘Spiritual Depth’ group are instrumental in planning and leading liturgy and they provide good role models for younger pupils.
- Holy Mass is a rich experience in every way. Pupil participation is high and the level of confidence with which pupils take part is impressive and deeply humbling. Live music provided by pupils is of a high quality. As a result, this witness by their peers encourages significant participation. Pupils contribute to a local food bank during Mass indicating care for people beyond the school community.
- It is clear from comments made by pupils, staff and governors that these rich prayer experiences are both formative and enjoyable.
- All stakeholders and visitors comment on the deep sense of reverence and exemplary behaviour of pupils during all liturgies. A wealth of video material and photographic evidence supports the student voice who articulate their gratitude for being able to experience liturgy in a powerful and prayerful way.

The quality of provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- For leaders at all levels the promotion of Collective Worship is a priority, so much so that despite the outstanding provision already in place, there is still a desire to search for new ways to be even better.
- Provision is generous in terms of personnel, time and financial resourcing. Two Religious Education specialists hold responsibility for chaplaincy and are supported by other committed staff with additional expertise.
- A spacious chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament is present, is regularly used by this community and it is a place of celebration, of witness and calm. In the words of one pupil 'it provides a place for a quiet moment whenever the need arises.'
- Morning prayers at staff briefing, in the classrooms and at assemblies are thoughtfully planned and appropriately adaptive to the everyday needs of the world and the college community.
- Creative resources provided by the chaplains include high quality visual stimuli, prayers and reflections ensuring that all staff have the confidence to deliver a meaningful experience to pupils.
- Leaders witness to their faith and commitment during school assemblies. Consistently high standards of delivery are undeniable and information technology and music are frequently used to great effect.
- Masses for all occasions are well prepared by the chaplains, form tutors and pupils. Senior pupils in the 'Spiritual Depth' group play a pivotal role in liturgical preparation and this good role modelling filters down to younger pupils and promotes evangelisation.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship is outstanding.

- The CEO, senior staff and pastoral learning managers routinely lead Collective Worship. This was evident during the inspection when observing a sixth form assembly which included input from the head of sixth form and impressive leadership by sixth formers themselves in relation to bereavement as well as an innovative year ten assembly promoting links with parishes.
- A wealth of opportunities exist for both pupils to develop spiritually. High impacting retreats are offered to all pupils in years 7-10 and in the sixth form and feedback from the student voice is very positive, one year ten pupil stating 'we are united in faith.'
- In addition, there is well-embedded support and training for staff in relation to Collective Worship. A recent module 'Spirituality and Depth' is offered as an integral part of the college's commitment to staff CPD and those currently undertaking this module speak of it as a reflective and enriching experience.
- Collective Worship, like all other aspects of college life, is regularly monitored using a sociological sampling model and the results acted upon. e.g. linking weekly themes to the readings of Sunday Mass, incorporating more music into assemblies and the updating of prayer files to include more global issues into the theme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.

- Pupils enjoy Religious Education and articulate that lessons are creative, interesting and challenging. They are engaged in, and curious about, what they are being taught. They demonstrate this by the questions they ask their teachers and each other. Pupils are reflective and respond to the opportunities provided to deepen their spirituality.
- Pupils are religiously literate and respond positively towards the emphasis the department places on this.
- Progress in Religious Education is high across all key stages. At the end of key stage three in 2014, 83% of students reached level 5+, 57% reached level 6+ and 11% reached level 7+
- Key stage four results in 2013 show attainment was significantly above the national and diocesan average and in 2014 it is very high across the ability range with 83% of all students achieving A*-C . In 2013 the percentage of pupils making three levels of progress was well above the expected target (21.8% above) Gifted pupils are stretched and challenged, evidenced in a cohort of 33 students achieving 82% A*-A at GCSE at the end of year ten allowing them to study AS Religious Education in year eleven and this is an improving trend. A rigorous and reliable approach to tracking and monitoring predicts similar outcomes for 2015.
- At key stage five pupils were observed making outstanding progress in lessons. In 2014 46% of pupils achieved A*-B, with 100% achieving A*-E. In 2013 the average points score per entrant was above the national average. Progress measures present a similar picture and should be viewed in line with the department’s Catholic and inclusive approach.
- General Religious Education in the sixth form is delivered through the ASDAN Key Skills course.
- Retention of students from year twelve to thirteen (or AS to A2) is very strong.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.

- The vast majority of lessons observed were outstanding and none less than good. Subject specialists are masters of their craft and use a wide range of activities and techniques to ensure all students make rapid and sustained progress.
- Lessons are appropriately paced and teachers have the confidence to adapt their plans in response to pupil needs. GCSE and A level teachers use their understanding of exam requirements and strong subject knowledge to ensure students achieve their potential. Effective questioning impacts positively on learning.

- Differentiation is evident in all key stages and seen at its strongest in key stage three where pupils are taught in mixed ability groups. Teaching assistants, working closely with class teachers, make an excellent contribution to the progress of pupils. The department is extremely well resourced and these resources are differentiated and uploaded onto a shared resource space for use by staff.
- The development of independent learning through the use of religious periodicals at key stage five is a positive development and though challenging for students it is beneficial and well received.
- The department provide numerous opportunities for learning outside of the classroom including visits to York and to lectures in philosophy and ethics.
- Assessment for learning is embedded. Pupils work is regularly marked and directs pupils on how best to improve. Pupils value the rapid turnaround from assessment to feedback.

How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.

- The curriculum leader for Religious Education has a clear vision, shared by all, and she has been instrumental in creating and maintaining the positive working climate of this thriving department.
- This climate is one filled with the spirit of the gospel where students can witness Christian values being lived out. She receives unwavering support from the assistant curriculum leader and together they provide a relentless focus on ongoing improvement.
- Leadership expressed with compassionate authority ensures thorough monitoring in relation to teaching, learning and progress. Transferred leadership is fostered and accepted by all in the department who lead on various initiatives, including World Religious Education week, SEN etc.
- Pope Paul VI taught that ‘modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses’. This sums up the department well, for they are all witnesses who speak with confidence and passion about their faith, lighting fires which inspire students to express and deepen their own faith evidenced in the work of groups such as ‘Spiritual Depth’
- The Religious Education curriculum is designed in a way that is imaginative and demonstrated perfectly in the year nine Mark’s Gospel course which not only engages students but also prepares them for the next key stage. An innovative project with year ten students to forge links with local parishes is receiving the full support of the clergy.
- General Religious Education, now with a new programme, is taught by a committed sixth form team and is mapped across the year to include ‘Academic Strength and Spiritual Depth’ days.
- The Diocesan confirmation programme has been implemented in schemes of work for year eight to prepare pupils for confirmation in year nine. All of the sacraments are taught in Religious Education lessons in years 7-11.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

HOW EFFECTIVE THE SCHOOL IS IN PROVIDING CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

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CATHOLIC LIFE:

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The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

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The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

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How well leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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SCHOOL DETAILS

School name	Carmel College – a Catholic Academy
Unique reference number	137622
Local authority	Darlington
This Inspection Report is produced for the Rt. Reverend Séamus Cunningham the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese, (c.f. Code Canon Law, 804, 806), and for the Governing Body of the school (Education Act 2005, Section 48). The inspection schedule follows criteria set by the National Board of Advisers and Inspectors.	
Chair of governors	Cyndi Hughes
CEO of Carmel Education Trust	Miss Maura Regan.
Head of School	Mr Mike Shorten
Date of previous school inspection	April 2009
Telephone number	01325 254525
Email address	admin@carmel.org.uk