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28 March 2012

Mrs Katie Robinson
Principal
Richard Rose Morton Academy
Wigton Road
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA2 6LB

Dear Mrs Robinson

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour:
Richard Rose Morton Academy**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave to me when I inspected your academy on 27 March 2012 with Peter Bannon, Additional Inspector. Please pass on our thanks to the teachers, leaders, students and Chief Executive of the Richard Rose Academy Federation, who spoke with us.

Since the previous inspection, the academy has moved into new purpose-built premises. There has been some instability in staffing, however, most classes are now taught by their regular teachers.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 October 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made inadequate progress in making improvements. The effectiveness of the academy in improving students' behaviour is inadequate.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Published data indicate that there has been some improvement in attainment since the previous inspection. In 2011, 85% of students achieved five good GCSE qualifications, a figure significantly higher than found nationally. Achievement was particularly strong in art and information and communication technology subjects. However, only 35% of students achieved five good GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics, a figure much lower than predicted on the basis of students' prior attainment. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of students attaining grade C or better in English, although attainment in English remains below average. However, in mathematics, improvement for this threshold has stalled and students' attainment is low. In 2011, the proportions of students making expected progress in English and mathematics were significantly lower than national norms. Progress was also weak in science and humanities subjects.

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Inspection evidence indicates that students' progress is not accelerating quickly enough to narrow the gap between attainment at the academy and that found nationally. The achievement of Year 11 students in mathematics and English is being boosted through targeted intervention sessions, but progress for students throughout the academy during core lessons in these, and other subjects, is inconsistent. There is evidence that higher-attaining students are making better progress in response to challenge that is extending their thinking, but students with average or low prior attainment are not making the progress that is expected relative to their starting points. Many students have poorly developed literacy skills that are evident in their perfunctory spoken answers and poorly constructed writing. The academy's leaders recognise this weakness. A well-designed cross-curricular programme provides Year 7 students with opportunities to develop their literacy and thinking skills but the academy's work to embed improvement in literacy has not had an impact in all subjects or for all year groups.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching observed by inspectors in the 17 lessons they visited was mixed. Overall, too many lessons were satisfactory or inadequate. In the best lessons, learning proceeded at a brisk pace and students were interested in activities that required them to work independently and purposefully. They assessed their own work and that of their peers accurately and took pride in their achievements. However, on too many occasions, learning proceeded slowly and insufficient care was taken by teachers to ensure that students' independent thinking was developed and applied. Teachers accepted verbal answers that were too brief and sometimes teachers talked for too long so that students' concentration waned. The quality of teachers' marking is variable, within and across departments. There are examples of detailed, regular and helpful marking that provide students with clear advice on how to improve their work. However, some marking is perfunctory or infrequent and there is no shared expectation as to how students should act on their teachers' advice. Students comment that they are bored when they have to copy information or when activities are not varied enough, particularly during long lessons. Some of them experienced difficulty in talking to inspectors about their own learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say that behaviour has improved due to the open-planned nature of the academy site that makes poor behaviour more visible. However, too many lessons continue to be disrupted by uncooperative or immature behaviour from a few students. Some students have an apathetic attitude to learning and show limited aspirations. A behaviour management policy has been introduced but it is not consistently implemented. The academy's core values are not referred to with sufficient regularity for students to understand their relevance. Students say that occurrences of bullying are rare and that the academy's staff act swiftly and effectively in response to incidents. Safeguarding is given a high priority and the academy is a safe environment. There are increasingly varied opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, including as ambassadors and sports leaders who work with pupils from local primary schools. These initiatives are having a positive impact on students' self-esteem. Students' attendance has increased significantly in

the last few months and is now closer to the national average, although, the persistent absence of a few students continues to hinder their progress.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The academy's leaders show commitment to securing improvement and recognise the challenges they face. They have taken effective action to develop the practice of some individual teachers. Steps have been taken to provide a more engaging curriculum and to work in partnership with external agencies to remove barriers to learning for identified students. The academy's leaders have engaged parents and carers more effectively, as indicated by the increased attendance at open evenings. Monitoring processes have been strengthened, underpinning self-evaluation that identifies appropriate improvement priorities. However, leaders at all levels have not raised achievement at a fast enough pace and some of their improvement strategies are not embedded.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2010

- To continue to work on raising attainment in all subjects but particularly in English and mathematics.
- To continue to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching so that this becomes the norm. In particular:
 - to make sure that teachers use assessment information effectively when planning lessons so that the work provided meets the needs of all students
 - to ensure that teachers use a wider range of teaching and learning styles so that lessons are more interesting and help students learn more effectively
 - to provide more opportunities for students to work cooperatively and independently with less direction from the teacher.