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5 December 2013

Ms Jacky Kennedy
Headteacher
Richard Rose Central Academy
Victoria Place
Carlisle
CA1 1LY

Dear Ms Kennedy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Richard Rose Central Academy

Following my visit with Naomi Taylor, Additional Inspector, and Anne Seneviratne, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint NQTs.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that:
 - inadequate teaching is rapidly eradicated
 - all teachers have high expectations of students and use the information they have about their attainment to set work that is challenging for all abilities
 - students are given clear, regular and helpful feedback on their work and the level at which they are working so they understand how to improve
 - teachers apply the academy's behaviour policy consistently in lessons and ensure that all students know what is expected of them.

- Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science, by consistently using and meeting targets based on students making at least three levels of progress between Years 7 and 11.

- Improve attendance in all year groups, including in the sixth form, so that it is at least in line with the national average.

- Improve the impact of the academy's leaders by:
 - ensuring that governors, senior and middle leaders are more actively involved in evaluating the academy's work and respond rapidly to the priorities for improvement
 - ensuring that action plans are sharply focused on the most urgent priorities, and that the academy's progress in tackling them is checked frequently and rigorously.

- Governors must improve the quality of their work by:
 - ensuring that they have a thorough understanding of whether the work done to improve the academy's performance is making any difference
 - supporting leaders in ensuring that all teachers are held responsible for the progress of the students they teach and are provided with appropriate training to help them improve their teaching
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding has a positive impact on the achievement of students for whom it is intended
 - taking part in and responding to an external review of governance to identify what support and training governors need.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3 to 4 December 2013.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with representatives of the School Improvement Board (SIB) including the Chair, the Executive Principal, the acting headteacher, the senior leadership team, subject leaders and groups of students. They observed teaching and learning in all year groups and in the sixth form and spoke with teachers following observations.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in April 2013, the SIB has met and is overseeing the work of both the Central and Morton Academies. Full transfer of sponsorship from the Richard Rose Trust to United Learning has been delayed and is now planned for April 2014. The leadership team has been restructured. Four new assistant headteachers have been appointed; all are new to the academy. Around a quarter of staff have joined the academy since the last inspection. All students in the sixth form, which is federated with the Richard Rose Morton Academy, are now taught at the Richard Rose Central site.

Achievement of students at the academy

The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grade C and above including English and mathematics fell to 35% in 2013 and was well below the academy's predictions. There was some improvement in English but performance in mathematics was much lower than expected; attainment in both subjects remains significantly below average. Attainment in science and humanities was similarly well below average.

Students have not made expected progress over time because teaching has not built on their knowledge and skills methodically or quickly enough, particularly for students of middle ability. Instability in staffing has contributed to a lack of continuity in teaching in English, mathematics and science and recent appointments have brought more stability to these subjects. Students make better progress in physical education, dance, art, photography and business studies, where teaching is more closely matched to their learning needs.

Students who are supported with additional pupil premium funding make less progress than other students in the academy. In 2013 the gap narrowed in English, but it widened in mathematics. Students with disabilities and those who have special educational needs did not do as well as predicted. For all of these groups, poor attendance was a factor, but the additional support they received was not effective in raising their achievement either.

Students in the sixth form do very well in vocational subjects. Those who stay on to complete A-Level courses mostly make expected progress, but there is a high drop-out rate, bringing achievement overall to below average.

The quality of teaching

There have been some improvements to teaching since the last inspection, supported by professional development and more effective procedures to manage performance.

Planning takes better account of the range of ability within each class and marking is sharper. Assessments are being closely checked following missed targets in many subjects in 2013. This is helping teachers to gain a more accurate view of students' progress.

Despite these improvements, students do not make the progress they could because too much teaching does not build on their learning sufficiently from lesson to lesson. In the lessons observed during this inspection, teaching was less effective where teachers attempted to control behaviour by giving students a number of short tasks to complete. Such activities occupied students but did not hold their interest because new learning was limited. Students became increasingly disengaged as the day progressed and behaviour deteriorated. As one student put it, 'too much control in lessons leads to behaviour being worse than it usually is'.

Some effective teaching was observed, where teachers gave clear explanations and demonstrations of the new knowledge and skills students were expected to learn. They gave students time to concentrate on tasks that challenged their thinking and enabled them to be creative or work out problems for themselves. This was seen in dance, art, business studies and English lessons. In an effective mathematics lesson, questioning was used well to probe and deepen students' understanding and the teacher adapted teaching to make sure every student left with a clear understanding of the properties of angles.

Support for students with special educational needs and for those eligible for pupil premium funding is not planned rigorously enough to raise their achievement. Some support plans focus too much on students' behaviour rather than on what teachers and support assistants can do to raise their achievement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Many students want to achieve well and display positive attitudes to learning. However, too many lessons are still disrupted by poor behaviour, particularly in middle- and lower-ability groups. Mostly this takes the form of 'messing about' and lack of attention, because the work does not capture students' interest. However, there were also several occasions when students were disruptive and abusive towards teachers during the inspection. Internal exclusion from lessons has increased but deterrents are not enforced firmly enough to prevent further incidents. The use of fixed-term exclusion from the academy has increased and is over twice the national average. Exclusion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and for students with special educational needs remains extremely high.

Attendance has not improved and remains well below average. The attendance of students in Years 10 and 11, those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals is of particular concern.

While students' behaviour is too variable in lessons, it has improved around the academy. Students conduct themselves well when moving between lessons and at break times. Those who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe and bullying is reducing because it is dealt with effectively. Many students feel well-supported by teachers who 'often go the extra mile' to help them with their work. They feel the acting headteacher listens to their views but there are limited opportunities to talk to teachers about how they want to learn.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders have not been able to drive improvements forward as rapidly as planned. The school improvement plan focuses on the right priorities but actions have not had the intended impact; key targets for achievement, behaviour and attendance have been not been achieved. Leaders have carried out a full analysis of the 2013 results in order to make sure the current Year 11 students get better results in examinations. Assessments are being checked carefully and early entry for mathematics GCSE has been stopped.

The acting headteacher has established more effective systems for checking and improving the performance of teachers and support staff. All staff now have clear, measurable targets that are closely linked to the improvement plan and students' progress. This is helping to eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that professional development supports teachers to improve. Staff are keen to improve and have a strong commitment to raising students' achievement; staff absence has reduced significantly.

There are several new key leaders who are at early stages in checking and developing provision in their areas of responsibility. New zone leaders in English, mathematics and science are focusing on raising achievement in their subject. Four new assistant headteachers are leading on key aspects of teaching and learning, behaviour and attendance, inclusion and achievement. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of their work.

There have been delays in the full handover to the new sponsor, United Learning, and a substantive headteacher has not yet been appointed. There are plans to increase the amount of time the Executive Principal works with the academy until an appointment is made; the precise role and responsibilities involved in this increase in allocated time have yet to be confirmed.

The SIB is now fully functional and has a strategic overview of the work of the Morton and Central academies. Board members have a full understanding of the issues and challenges facing leaders at this academy and set a clear vision for improvement. However, plans to establish a local governing body have been delayed, so closer monitoring, for example through linked governors, is not yet established.

External support

The academy has received helpful support from its partner school, Bishop Rawstorne, to develop performance management and data analysis systems and review teaching and learning and behaviour support systems. United Learning is providing further additional support to improve mathematics teaching. Academy leaders are actively seeking to develop partnerships with local schools to support improvement at the academy.