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10 March 2014

Mr Des Bird
Headteacher
Richard Rose Morton Academy
Wigton Road
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA2 6LB

Dear Mr Bird

Special measures monitoring inspection of Richard Rose Morton Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 7 March 2014, 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. Telephone conversations were held with the Chair of the School Improvement Board and a representative from the sponsor, United Learning. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection you have taken up post as substantive headteacher of the academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

The executive headteacher, headteacher and leadership team have a clear understanding of what went wrong at the academy and have a plan to bring about the necessary improvement. The plans that have been produced are clearly focused on the areas identified in the last inspection and have enough detail to ensure that members of staff can be held accountable for the progress against the success criteria. A lot has already been put in place, with the quality of teaching taking priority. However the headteacher is aware that teaching across the academy needs to improve further.

Senior leaders have a clear overview of the progress students are making and they now have more confidence in the reliability of the assessments made by the teaching staff. There are arrangements with another academy to share the marking and moderation of work to help further in the accuracy of the assessments.

It is recognised that good attendance is critical to improving progress. There are many strategies in place, but attendance in Key Stage 4 needs to improve further. The strategies which are used need to be evaluated to see what works the best.

The sponsor, with the academy, has set up a school improvement board which meets to monitor the actions taken and the progress towards targets. The Chair of the School Improvement Board has a very clear picture of the academy. He knows the priority areas and the challenges ahead. He is determined to drive improvement and has a plan to transfer functions from the school improvement board to a local governing body when the time is right and only when there is sufficient capacity and expertise.

The executive headteacher works closely with the headteacher and there is a clear focus to improve standards within the academy, with support and challenge from the school improvement board and the sponsor to make the necessary improvements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers after consultation with the lead Her Majesty's Inspector.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State and the Chair of the School Improvement Board. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Pritchard

Her Majesty's Inspector