

Richard Rose Morton Academy

Wigton Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 6LB

Inspection dates

6–7 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2015, there was a significant improvement in overall attainment and progress. However, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged and other students remained, and it is still not closing quickly enough.
- Year 7 students supported by literacy and numeracy catch-up funding make too little progress.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that students make enough progress in all subjects.
- Teaching in science is not good enough to enable students to overcome a legacy of underachievement.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information when planning, to ensure that they meet the needs of all groups of students in their lessons.
- The curriculum and teaching does not always meet the needs of low-attaining students and those who have special educational needs.
- Support in literacy is developing but not enough is done to promote a love of reading.
- Some disadvantaged students and some of those who have special educational needs have poor attendance.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has inspired all staff to be ambitious and to strive to provide a high-quality education for all students.
- Led effectively by the headteacher, the academy has travelled a considerable distance in a short amount of time. As a result, there have been improvements in the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and achievement.
- Members of the school improvement board and local governing body, alongside the sponsor, provide effective challenge and support to leaders.
- Students behave extremely well around the academy. They are polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students respect the academy environment and wear their uniform well.
- The work the academy does to keep its students safe is exemplary. The welfare and personal development of students is a very high priority for all staff.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for students further by:
 - ensuring that all students make at least good progress in all subjects relative to their starting points
 - ensuring that all Year 7 students supported by literacy and numeracy catch-up funding make at least good progress during their first year in the academy
 - building on the improvements secured so far to make certain that gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others are closed quickly
 - raising the attainment and progress of all students in science.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by making sure all teachers:
 - use assessment information when planning, to drive learning and progress for all groups of students in their lessons
 - provide the right level of support and challenge for all students
 - use questioning effectively to check and develop students' understanding
 - provide opportunities for students to act upon the advice given in written feedback, and follow this up when it is not done effectively.

- Review the curriculum to ensure that it is meeting the needs of low-attaining students and those who have special educational needs in the most effective way.

- Promote reading for pleasure across the academy as part of the wider strategy to develop students' literacy skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Under the dynamic leadership of the headteacher, the academy has travelled a considerable distance in a short space of time. He has galvanised the whole community and the impact of this is evident in the improvements in the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and outcomes.
- Staff and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the way the academy is led. Information gathered in student surveys is also very positive. It is clear that the headteacher has been successful in taking staff, parents and students with him on this journey of improvement. There is a tangible ethos in the academy of ambition and aspiration for all.
- Although leaders are proud of the distance travelled, their self-evaluation is very clear about the areas that still require further improvement. The development plan produced after the last inspection provided a clear road map for the journey out of special measures, and this same focused planning is now informing how the academy will move to the next level.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders. Staff have received training on how to develop these aspects in their curriculum areas. Outside lessons, the academy provides other opportunities for this development, many of which have recently been brought together under the newly developed 'Morton Pledge'. Leaders recognise that the academy is located in an area that is not culturally diverse, and have placed a great emphasis on creating opportunities for students to broaden their horizons. During the recent general election, the academy ran its own mock election, to develop students' understanding of democracy.
- Changes that leaders have made to the curriculum, such as the introduction of the ethics and values programmes, have focused on preparing students effectively for life in modern Britain. Leaders have allocated more time to English, mathematics and science, reflecting the priority they give to ensuring that outcomes in these subjects are strong. Curriculum and assessment information for each subject is readily accessible on the website, so parents are aware of what students are studying each term.
- Senior leaders have taken care to ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. However, not enough consideration has been given to whether the content and the way it is delivered is effectively meeting the needs of low-attaining students and the high number of students who have special educational needs.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Staff who are not teaching as well as expected are challenged and supported to improve their practice. There is a wide range of bespoke professional development, including coaching and mentoring, which staff appreciate. Staff spoken to during the inspection feel that this professional development has had a positive impact on their teaching. Senior leaders have a good knowledge of what teaching is typically like across the academy.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust and used effectively to drive up standards in teaching and improve outcomes for students. The headteacher describes teachers' targets as 'fair but challenging'. They are focused on students' progress and explicitly linked to the Teachers' Standards.
- There has been a significant improvement in the quality of middle leadership since the last inspection. In the small number of areas where this is not good, senior leaders are taking action to improve this. The middle leaders interviewed during the inspection explained how they now feel empowered to carry out their role, and value the professional development they have had to enable them to do this effectively. Middle leaders work alongside senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in their departments and the impact it has on students' outcomes. All heads of department complete an annual self-evaluation and development plan which makes explicit their role in the overall improvement of the quality of education in the academy.
- Leaders have acted on the recommendations of the external review of pupil premium that was carried out in September 2014. The improved attainment and progress of disadvantaged students in 2015 demonstrates that leaders have had some impact in how they have used the pupil premium funding. However, while the achievement of these students is improving, leaders are not targeting their actions effectively enough to ensure that gaps with their peers are closed quickly. The Year 7 catch-up funding is not being used effectively enough. Too many of these students are not making enough progress during this important first year of their secondary education.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The work the academy does to keep its students safe is exemplary. Leadership of this area is very strong. Staff engage effectively and appropriately with parents, carers and other stakeholders to make sure that all students are supported and safe. Procedures to

ensure that all staff receive relevant training are robust, as are the protocols and practice for record-keeping. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people. The fact that the academy is a domestic violence champion pilot school reflects its desire to be at the vanguard of safety initiatives.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is of a very high quality. The school improvement board provides effective challenge and support to academy leaders. Working closely with the sponsor, it has played a significant part in bringing about rapid improvements across the academy. In advance of meetings, senior leaders are asked to prepare responses to a number of searching questions. This forensic questioning reflects the skills and expertise of the members of the board and their relentless focus on outcomes for students. They are focused on the important work ahead as the academy moves to its next level of improvement and, to this end, are working closely with the newly formed local governing body to ensure that it has the necessary capacity to provide ongoing challenge.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and students are benefiting from some good and outstanding teaching. However, this is not consistent across all of the academy and some students, particularly low-attaining ones, are not always getting access to this high-quality learning in their lessons. Teaching has not been good enough over time to ensure that students make good progress in science.
- The very positive relationships that exist between staff and students clearly make a contribution to the learning in most lessons. However, in a small number of lessons, where these relationships do not exist and teaching fails to engage students, low-level disruption hinders progress and learning.
- Teaching in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 3, does not always develop problem-solving skills effectively. In some of the lessons observed, students were successfully attempting many examples of the same type of question without being challenged to go into greater depth. Opportunities were missed to develop students' mathematical understanding.
- Following formal assessments that take place at key points throughout the year, teachers input achievement data on their students. Inspection evidence indicates that not all class teachers are clear about how the various achievement information, such as target grades and 'working-at' grades, are used to really drive progress. This lack of clarity means that too many teachers are not using assessment information effectively in their planning to ensure that the work in lessons is at the right level to meet students' needs.
- In lessons where teaching is good or better, teachers use their expertise and passion for their subject, coupled with their knowledge of their students, to enthuse and involve them in their learning. They use questioning skilfully to check and extend students' understanding. They have high expectations of all their students. Inspectors observed evidence of this style of teaching in art, media, Spanish, humanities, physical education, textiles and English.
- Inspectors observed examples of the most-able students being challenged to achieve the highest possible standards. This was particularly evident in a Year 11 English lesson where the teacher was empowering students to go beyond a formulaic way of writing about *Macbeth*. The teacher was actively encouraging them to give their own views and speculate, but was also developing their skills of sustained analysis at the same time.
- In students' books, there is evidence of teachers giving helpful feedback on how to improve their work. When students respond to this it helps them to make progress. Not all students are doing this, however, and some teachers are willing to accept this, alongside, untidily presented and incomplete work. This is particularly the case for boys.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good. Staff know and care for their students well. There is a nurturing ethos in the academy that creates an environment in which students can thrive.

- Conversations that inspectors had with students during the inspection indicate that many of them feel very positive about their education. Year 7 students were keen to talk about how well they had settled in to the academy and how much they were enjoying their lessons. Some Year 11 boys talked positively about the changes that had taken place since the arrival of the new headteacher. They described the impact this has had on their attitudes to learning and commitment to securing good qualifications to meet their career aspirations.
- In a recent student survey, 100% of students said they felt safe in the academy. In the same survey, 100% said they knew how to use the internet safely.
- Evidence from this student survey and one conducted during the inspection, indicates that bullying is rare. When it does occur, students feel that it is dealt with effectively. They say that homophobic language, such as the use of 'gay' in a derogatory way, is rare, but when it occurs, it is challenged. A display in a prominent part of the academy encourages respect for sexual diversity.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave extremely well around the academy. They respect the environment which is free from litter, even at the end of break and lunchtime. There is a large, attractive display of students' artwork in a busy area of the academy and this is respected and appreciated. Students behave well during break times. Whether socialising inside or outside, their behaviour is mature and calm. The numerous staff on duty use this time to engage with students in a positive way.
- In most lessons, students show respect to their teachers and each other which creates a positive atmosphere for learning. However, in a small number of lessons, this is not the case, and the behaviour of some students prevents them and others in class from making progress.
- A significant reduction in fixed term exclusions and the number of students being internally isolated is evidence of the marked improvement in behaviour since the last inspection. Staff, students and parents all comment on the positive impact this has had on learning in the academy.
- Since the last inspection, staff have worked hard to bring about a significant reduction in overall absence figures and the number of students who are persistently absent. However, they are well aware that behind the headline figures there is still concern about the attendance of some disadvantaged students and some of those who have special educational needs. There are early signs that a renewed focus on improving the attendance of these students is having impact.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, there was a significant improvement in overall attainment and progress, bringing the academy's performance much closer to national averages. In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's floor standards but it did in 2015; this represents a considerable distance travelled in a very short space of time in terms of students' outcomes. The improvement in students' progress in English was stronger than in mathematics. Students' past outcomes and current progress in science are not strong. Achievement is inconsistent across a range of subjects, although many improved from 2014 to 2015. Strong outcomes in Art and Spanish reflect high quality teaching in these subjects.
- Although disadvantaged students are making better progress and attaining higher standards, the gap between them and their peers is not closing quickly enough.
- Year 7 students who are supported by the literacy and numeracy catch-up premium are not making enough progress during the first year of their secondary education. The academy's own performance data indicates that too many students are not making enough progress throughout Key Stage 3.
- Those students who have special educational needs made much better progress in 2015 than in 2014, particularly in English. There was also a significant rise in their attainment. The register of students who have special educational needs has recently been reviewed. This has led to an increase in numbers of those students with identified needs. Leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that the way that all teaching assistants work with students has an impact. In the classroom, there is evidence that not all teaching is tailored effectively to ensure that these students can make progress.
- The greater attention given to the most-able in the academy is having an impact. More of these students achieved A and A* grades in 2015. In lessons observed, inspectors saw evidence of the most-able students being challenged to achieve the highest possible standards.
- The academy's strategy for improving students' literacy is clear and detailed. There is a focus on sustained improvement rather than 'quick fixes'. The effective use of sentences has been the first priority,

with all curriculum areas focusing on this. However, leaders are aware that not enough is being done at the moment to promote reading, particularly for pleasure.

- Year 11 destination information indicates that students are being effectively prepared to progress to further education, training or to enter full-time employment.

School details

Unique reference number	135620
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	428870

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Sponsor-led academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	542
Appropriate authority	The sponsor
Chair	Nigel Robson
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Des Bird
Telephone number	01228 822644
Website	www.rrma.org.uk
Email address	info@rrma.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 November 2013

Information about this school

- Richard Rose Morton Academy is a smaller than average, 11–16 mixed comprehensive school. It has been sponsored by United Learning since 2014.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The pupil premium is funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and for looked after children.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and, consequently, few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The academy has a high number of students who have special educational needs.
- The headteacher was appointed in February 2014 and is supported by an executive headteacher.
- The academy uses no alternative educational provision for its students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 27 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders. They also carried out a book scrutiny jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with the school improvement board. A separate meeting was also held with a representative from the sponsor.
- Inspectors took account of the 66 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and of the 46 questionnaires completed by staff, alongside other survey information provided by the academy.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included information on the academy's own view of its performance; achievement, behaviour and attendance information, and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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