

Richard Rose Central Academy

Victoria Place, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1LY

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, leaders, governors and sponsor have transformed the culture of this school and, as a result, outcomes are improving year on year.
- In 2016, the school achieved its best ever results. Attainment was well above average in English, physical education, art, photography, law, biology and physics.
- Leaders and governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The monitoring system identifies pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Teachers then ensure that they receive the necessary support to help them make good progress.
- Teaching is rapidly improving across subjects and year groups. This is particularly the case in mathematics and science.
- The curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development across a wide range of subjects. Leaders are committed to raising pupils' aspirations by further developing their social and cultural skills.
- The sixth form is good. The teaching and support that learners receive enable them to achieve well. They are well prepared for the next stage of life.
- The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective. Pupils feel very safe.
- Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They challenge and support leaders in all aspects of the school's work. Governors have played an instrumental role in bringing about improvements in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and, as a result, are making good progress.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. They are well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. There has been a recent reduction in fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence, which have been stubbornly high in the past. Pupils on occasion use inappropriate language.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving over time. Additional funding is used increasingly well to help them catch up with their peers.
- Reading for pleasure is in its early stages of development. Leaders have plans in place to foster a love of reading across the school to broaden horizons and deepen knowledge.
- The progress of the most able pupils is good but can accelerate further. There are some missed opportunities to challenge pupils more deeply, debate key issues to develop their higher-order skills orally and to raise their aspirations.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes further by:
 - tackling the negative attitudes of a small group of disadvantaged boys so that they behave well, attend regularly and make faster progress
 - challenging pupils more deeply, particularly the most able, to provide extended verbal answers and debate their learning in different areas of the curriculum as well as wider cultural and topical issues that have an impact on their lives
 - raising pupils' aspirations, from Year 7, particularly for the most able, so that they can compete with their peers nationally for the top jobs
 - fostering a love of reading across the school in order to deepen pupils' layers of knowledge
 - eradicating all inappropriate name-calling.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, leaders, governors and sponsor are determined and ambitious for all pupils. They have taken decisive action to transform the culture and ethos of the school. As a result, this is a school that is improving rapidly.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. No stone is left unturned. They are self-critical and reflective, which helps them to address key issues promptly. For example, the school's actions to secure improvements in mathematics and science are currently leading to better outcomes for pupils.
- Middle leaders are held accountable by senior staff and governors for securing continuous improvement in pupils' progress across subjects and year groups. They ensure that progress is carefully tracked against pupils' targets. Where there is underperformance, they check the impact of interventions to ensure that pupils who are falling behind catch up quickly. As a result, outcomes are improving.
- Leaders and governors use performance management well to improve teaching and progress. The monitoring of teaching is rigorous and supports middle leaders to address inconsistencies. For example, it is a priority for all teachers to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all abilities within a class so that all pupils are stretched and challenged appropriately. To achieve this, teachers are given a comprehensive training programme, which involves mentoring and coaching from the best teachers within the school.
- Teachers also value the support given to them by the school's specialist leaders in education as well as the subject education advisers from the trust. There is an open culture in the school where teachers discuss their planning and share resources to meet the needs of pupils more precisely. This is leading to rapidly improving progress across subjects and year groups.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have reviewed the subjects and courses on offer across the key stages and made changes to ensure progression and prepare pupils better for future life. There is a commitment to raise aspirations further and improve pupils' life chances through the curriculum, which prepares them for GCSEs and beyond. Pupils are securing skills quickly and starting to transfer them in different contexts.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used well to support the personal and academic needs of a small nurture group. As a result, all pupils make good progress towards age-related expectations in their spelling, reading and mathematics.
- Leaders promote equality and diversity and challenge prejudiced behaviour. Pupils say that there is a small amount of homophobic name-calling, but leaders are quick to pick up on negative comments. Racist bullying is rare.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for, treated with respect and currently make good progress. The additional funding has been used more effectively since the last inspection to ensure that resources including teaching assistants are carefully deployed to meet their needs and abilities. Leaders track pupil

progress frequently and adapt plans to ensure that pupils receive the necessary support to flourish personally and academically.

- Leaders are taking effective action which means pupils' behaviour and attendance are improving. Since September, there has been a more consistent approach to discipline which is reflected in the recent rapid reduction of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence.
- Leaders promote fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the curriculum and within the personal, social and health education programme. For example, pupils are taught about diet, exercise, self-esteem, depression, financial planning, marriage and parenting. Pupils also have access to a number of extra-curricular activities that take place after school including dancing, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, climbing, rugby and music. In March, over 100 dancers from the school took part in Big Dance at the local theatre. Year 11 pupils used the event to complete their BTEC performance assessment.
- Pupils have access to careers education to support them in making important decisions about their options at the end of Year 8, Year 11 and Year 13. Leaders have adopted a key stage 3 mastery curriculum in the core subjects in order to prepare pupils earlier for GCSE and beyond. As a result, pupils are securing skills more quickly and transferring them into different contexts.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate and highly committed to the continuous improvement of the school. They use their deep knowledge and experience to ask leaders probing questions about aspects of school improvement. Governors have responsibilities for subjects and key focus areas, which enable them to play a proactive role within the school.
- Governors hold leaders to account through the local governing body and the school improvement board. Minutes of meetings over time give a clear outline of the journey of improvement and provide evidence of challenge and support. They evaluate the impact of the additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium by routinely checking their progress, attendance and behaviour. Increasingly, the funding is used to good effect. Governors challenge leaders promptly if there are concerns, to ensure that strategies are revised to secure rapid improvements.
- The trust has been instrumental in the transformation of this school. The regional director, who was the executive principal at the time of the last inspection, has provided clear direction to leaders and governors by mentoring and coaching them. The principal, along with the regional director, has brokered the necessary support to improve the school quickly and ensured that pupils were not disadvantaged when the Carlisle floods damaged the ground floor of the school in December 2015.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records show that all staff are trained to the appropriate levels. The safeguarding team communicates well with the local authority and draws advice from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the safeguarding hub to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. The school's electronic

logging systems comprehensively track responses to ensure prompt action.

- Leaders protect pupils from radicalisation and are vigilant to local issues. Staff have completed the 'Prevent' training and do not shy away from openly discussing extremism with pupils.
- A number of senior staff and governors are trained in safer recruiting. New staff are well vetted to ensure the safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils are taught about staying safe online and understand the dangers of the inappropriate use of mobile technology and social networking sites. Heads of learning work well with pupils and parents to ensure that any possible online misuse is tackled quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to deliver structured lessons that secure good pupil progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well and are quick to encourage individuals who struggle to stay focused on their learning. As a result, pupils' academic resilience is improving.
- The teaching in English is strong. Teachers reinforce pupils' knowledge of different literary techniques to enable them to analyse texts and write about them. In Year 8, for example, the teacher emphasised the rhythm in a piece of writing through her voice and with actions to show the impact of punctuation on the reader.
- The teaching in mathematics and science is improving quickly and securing more rapid progress for pupils. Teachers are using assessment information more effectively to identify what pupils can and cannot do. They tailor their teaching and feedback to plug gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. In Year 11 mathematics, for example, the teacher designed personalised tasks for pupils in order to secure their mathematical fluency when factorising brackets. In science, teachers use a progress plenary to address misconceptions.
- Parents receive regular information about their child's progress. This includes postcards home to celebrate their child's achievements as well as progress reports. Where necessary, leaders and heads of learning meet with parents to discuss strategies to improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and progress. As a result, the partnership between school and home is increasingly positive and mutually supportive.
- Pupils receive homework to consolidate their learning in line with the school's homework policy but this is not yet consistently applied across all subjects and year groups.
- Teachers question pupils to secure key knowledge and understanding. However, there are missed opportunities for teachers to ask more probing questions that encourage pupils to respond with extended answers that develop their higher-order thinking skills, particularly for the most able. Pupils rarely debate their learning with their peers to support mastery of key concepts.
- Pupils read in lessons and tutor time. However, pupils told inspectors that they do not routinely read for pleasure. Leaders have put together a programme to foster a love of

reading across the school. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Teachers go the extra mile to encourage pupils to do their best and to praise them when they are successful. Teachers have given up their Saturdays to provide additional revision classes for Year 11 pupils.
- Support for vulnerable pupils is exemplary. Staff work in partnership with their families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help they need to flourish.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are taught how to stay healthy mentally and physically. The personal, social and health education programme promotes healthy eating and the importance of keeping fit. Assemblies include drugs awareness. Pupils with mental health issues are supported through art therapy.
- Pupils receive careers guidance to help them make the right choices about their futures. Leaders recognise that there is more work to be done to build pupils' self-confidence and to raise their aspirations, particularly for the most able, so that they can compete with their peers nationally for the top jobs.
- A small number of pupils reported to inspectors that there is some bullying and too much use of homophobic name-calling. However, pupils acknowledged that staff are quick to challenge derogatory language and that name-calling has dramatically reduced this year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders introduced a revised, more rigorous behaviour policy in September 2016 to ensure that no class is disadvantaged by low-level disruption. Staff are committed to ensuring that this new system raises expectations and improves the climate for learning so that teachers can teach and all pupils can learn. The impact of the policy is evident in the significant reduction of fixed-term exclusions and the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Attendance remains below national averages but is rapidly improving year on year.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are increasingly positive although there is a small group of disadvantaged boys who do not behave consistently well. On occasion, they disrupt the learning of others. Leaders are working closely with them to improve their attitudes in order to secure their good progress through the 'boys to men' programme. The revised behaviour policy is also starting to tackle their behaviour, as evidenced by the rapid reduction of referrals to the school's academic and pastoral support centre. The school is orderly. Pupils are smart and wear their new school uniform with pride.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons. Teachers check pupils have brought the right equipment

and that they are ready to learn at the start of each day.

- Pupils, parents and teachers say that behaviour has improved considerably since the start of the year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Achievement in all year groups across the school has improved rapidly because of good teaching. Leaders have made this a priority and, as a result, current pupils are making good progress. Work in books supports this judgement.
- Average progress that pupils made in eight of their GCSEs in 2016 was similar to other pupils nationally. Lower-attaining pupils performed particularly well. In English, outcomes were well above average for all pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able.
- In 2016, standards in sociology, music, dance, health and social care, business and finance, French, photography, physics and biology were above the national average for a good pass or better.
- In 2016, outcomes in mathematics and science were below average. Current pupils are making stronger progress, as evidenced in lessons, assessments and books. Leaders of these subjects are ambitious and determined to drive up standards and rescue a legacy of underperformance.
- Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are lower than the national average. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to help pupils meet age-related expectations in literacy and numeracy.
- From their starting points, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made stronger progress since the last inspection. This is because leaders are correctly identifying pupils' needs and abilities, putting in place effective support and monitoring their academic and pastoral progress carefully.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education, training or employment. The number of pupils progressing to apprenticeships is well above the national average.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, is improving over time. Differences between their progress and others nationally are diminishing quickly. Additional funding is used well to purchase extra resources and revision materials, and to provide small-group support, as well as targeted mentoring.
- Reading for pleasure is at an early stage of development. Leaders recognise this and have plans in place for fostering a love of reading across the school so that pupils benefit from the advantages of reading widely and often.
- Most able pupils made less progress than their peers nationally in 2016, including the most able disadvantaged, although their progress is improving quickly. There are sometimes missed opportunities for teachers to challenge pupils' thinking in order to deepen their layers of knowledge and debate all aspects of the curriculum.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have successfully improved the quality of provision and secured stronger outcomes in the sixth form since the last inspection. They have refined the curriculum and the courses on offer by taking into account the rapidly improving outcomes at the end of Year 11. There are also stricter entry requirements to secure success rates.
- In 2016, learners, especially girls, made good progress overall from their starting points. Learners made above-average progress in photography, art and design, textiles, history, law, health and social care, extended project qualification, biology, travel and tourism, music and computing.
- The number of learners who improve their grades in GCSE in English and mathematics is rising, although more slowly in mathematics. In 2016, learners who did not have a grade C or above in GCSE English improved their result by at least one grade, and in mathematics by half a grade.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. The head of sixth form makes sure that all learners receive advice and guidance so that they follow the most suitable courses, based on their prior attainment and their career ambitions. The 'step up to sixth form' induction programme supports the transition from Year 11 into Year 12. Disadvantaged boys, for example, who have not performed as well as others in the past, are placed on more appropriate courses and currently making better progress in vocational and academic courses.
- Good teaching, learning and assessment support learners to make strong progress. Teachers plan lessons to develop a wide range of skills. Relationships between teachers and learners are very positive and respectful. Learners respond well to verbal and written feedback. Homework is used effectively to consolidate learning and prepare learners well for their exams.
- Learners know how to stay safe, including how to be safe online and how to live healthy lifestyles. The extended project qualification provides opportunities for learners to reflect and share their personal experiences with their peers, particularly around mental health. However, in other areas of the curriculum, learners do not routinely self-reflect, discuss their learning, justify their opinions and debate cultural and topical issues that impact on their future lives. As a result, learners' social and cultural skills are less developed.
- Levels of attendance are improving as a direct result of the head of sixth form's close monitoring of learners' attendance and the targeted support that learners receive in choosing their courses.
- The number of learners who leave the sixth form during the academic year has reduced significantly. This is due to the improved advice, guidance and support that learners now receive prior to arriving in the sixth form.
- Learners receive effective careers advice during their time in the sixth form and, as a result, there is a growing number who progress to appropriate higher-education institutions, apprenticeships, employment and training. Links with the University of Cumbria are strong, although they are less so with local employers. There are missed opportunities to increase this further through compulsory work experience and

enrichment activities relevant to learners' needs.

School details

Unique reference number	135621
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10032197

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	661
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	87
Appropriate authority	United Learning Trust
Chair	Liz Beaty
Principal	Stephen Gilby
Telephone number	01228 822060
Website	www.rrca.org.uk
Email address	info@rrca.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school was re-brokered to United Learning Trust in September 2014.
- There has been a change of principal since the last inspection. The executive principal, at the time of the last inspection, is now the regional director of the school.

- The school is smaller than other secondary schools in England. The school's sixth form is also smaller in size.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- A small number of pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The sixth form meets the interim minimum standards for academic and vocational subjects.
- In December 2015, the school was affected by the Carlisle floods and the ground floor was severely damaged.

Information about this inspection

- In this inspection, inspectors observed the school at work. They visited lessons and observed pupils at break, lunchtimes, tutor times and in an assembly.
- Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in lessons and looked at the information about the progress of pupils within classes. Inspectors conducted joint observations with senior leaders and examined pupils' assessments and progress in books.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation which included the school's self-evaluation, action planning documents, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's own assessment information, safeguarding records and school policies and procedures.
- A meeting was held with the regional director of United Learning Trust, who was the executive principal at the time of the last inspection.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders, four groups of pupils, members of the local governing body and the school improvement board, which included the chair of United Learning Trust.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors took into account 73 returns from the online questionnaire for staff; 133 from the online survey for pupils and 36 responses from Parent View.

Inspection team

Lisa Crausby, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Toni Roethling	Ofsted Inspector

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