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26 April 2013

Ms Jacky Kennedy
Headteacher
Richard Rose Central Academy
Victoria Place
Carlisle
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Dear Ms Kennedy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Richard Rose Central Academy

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 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 recent section 5 inspection. Please also thank your colleagues, the executive principal and sponsor representative who met with me.

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

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the newly appointed executive principal, the acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and a representative from the new sponsor, United Learning. The inspector was taken on a tour of the school. The sponsor's statement of action and the academy improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, the transfer of sponsorship from the Richard Rose Trust to United Learning has been approved, with a target date of June 2013 for full transfer. An executive principal has been appointed and has been in post since February 2013. The constitution of the governing body has changed. A school improvement board (SIB) was established in March 2013, with a new chair who is experienced in school improvement. The SIB will monitor and evaluate implementation of the improvement plans and provide challenge and support to academy leaders. A local governing body will be established for each of the two Richard Rose Academies in September 2013. It is intended that the SIB will operate until both of the academies are securely good.

An effective working relationship has been established with Bishop Rawstorne Academy, which is a national teaching school with a National Leader of Education. A comprehensive programme of training and support has been established to help build capacity in leadership at all levels. Specialist subject leaders are supporting the development of systems to monitor and improve teaching and check on students' progress in subject areas.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Academy leaders have made a rapid start to drive improvements forward. The executive principal has established a clear strategic vision for the Richard Rose federation, based on the two academies becoming securely good. He has led a review of provision at Richard Rose Central. This has given leaders a better understanding of what needs to be improved and how these improvements can be made. The new sponsor, United Learning, and leaders from Bishop Rawstorne School are providing effective support to build capacity in leadership and improve teaching. The acting headteacher is raising expectations of what students should achieve and holding staff more accountable.

Changes to the organisation of leaders' roles are ensuring that the deputy headteachers provide more of a strategic lead and are responsible for securing improvement in key areas. The appointment of a deputy headteacher as a strategic leader for the sixth form clarifies responsibility areas and lines of accountability. The deputy headteacher leading on behaviour is promoting a more consistent approach to behaviour management.

Senior leaders are taking appropriate steps to improve teaching and raise achievement. The acting headteacher now has a secure evaluation of teaching taking account of students' progress in lessons and over time. She is taking action to eradicate inadequate teaching and has put comprehensive support packages in place to help teachers improve. A new data system is helping leaders to identify underperformance and supporting teachers to plan more effective lessons and intervention for individual students. The academy's tracking data indicate that students in Year 11 are on course to make better progress than they have in previous years.

The newly formed SIB has been strengthened with the recruitment of governors with relevant skills. It has not met yet but detailed terms of reference have been drawn up. The promotion of high standards of educational achievement is firmly at the centre of its work. Governors' roles in challenging and supporting leaders and managing the performance of staff are clear.

The annual school improvement plan addresses fully all the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. It is well organised and provides a useful position statement indicating what needs to improve. The plan shows clearly how success will be measured and includes key milestones to indicate the direction of travel. Actions are appropriately prioritised and lines of accountability are specified. The sponsor's statement of action is well written and shows ambition for the students.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint any more newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector