

Richard Rose Central Academy

Victoria Place, Carlisle, CA1 1LY

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students, including those who are disadvantaged, attain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching quality, while improving well, still varies across the school. This inconsistency means students do not routinely make good progress in their learning.
- The progress students are making in mathematics still lags behind that in English.
- Not all staff make best use of the good information leaders hold about disabled students and those with special educational needs or the most able to challenge them to do their best in their work.
- While students write interesting sentences and paragraphs that convey meaning well, they do not always use spelling or punctuation correctly.
- Teachers are not consistent in applying the academy's policy in order to give students opportunities to respond to the helpful comments made in marking and feedback.
- Although both improving, attendance rates are well below national averages and exclusions too high.

The school has the following strengths

- Strong leadership from the sponsors, governors and the Executive Principal have transformed this academy. There is no hiding place for underperformance. Students and staff take pride in being part of this community. The academy's motto, 'the best in everyone' is lived out.
- Middle leaders are holding staff in their teams to account increasingly well for quality of teaching and the performance of students.
- As a result of better teaching, an increasing proportion of which is good or better, students are making better progress in their learning. Inspectors share the confidence of leaders that results in 2015, particularly in English, are set to rise so that floor standards are likely to be exceeded for the first time in the academy's history.
- There has been a marked improvement in the behaviour of students and the attitudes they display. On inspection, students were polite. The academy is a calm, orderly place and students feel safe.
- There has been a marked decline in the proportion of students who are persistently absent. This is the result of good partnerships between students, parents and external agencies.
- The sixth form continues to improve. Students in Years 12 and 13 are making better progress in their learning. The provision is led well by the senior deputy headteacher who has a sharp understanding of strengths and what needs to be improved.
- The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was the academy’s first full inspection since being placed into special measures in January 2013. In the intervening period, one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) checked on the academy’s progress on five occasions.
- In this inspection, inspectors observed the academy at work. They visited lessons and observed students at break and lunchtimes. They observed the teaching and learning in the lessons taught by teachers, spoke with students, looked at the information about the progress of students within the classes, and examined work in books completed over time. Three visits to classes were conducted jointly with members of the school’s leadership team.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and met with the Executive Principal and members of the academy’s senior and middle leadership teams.
- Formal discussions were held with 30 students representing all year groups throughout the school. Inspectors also took the opportunity to speak with students around the academy.
- Discussions were also held with the Chair of the School Improvement Board who is also Chair of the United Learning Trust, the Director of United Learning and two members of the Local Governing Board, including the Chair.
- An inspector also spoke with a representative of the Cumbria local authority’s pupil referral unit which offers alternative provision for a small number of students.
- Inspectors also took into account the 71 returns from staff via the inspection questionnaire, the 30 responses to Parent View received over the last 365 days up to the end of the second day of inspection, and information from the academy’s own survey of parental opinion carried out in 2014/15.

Inspection team

Mark Williams, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jim Hall

Additional Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Additional Inspector

Christine Kennedy

Additional Inspector

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.

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than average in size when compared with other secondary schools in England. The academy's sixth form is also smaller in size.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who are eligible for funding through the pupil premium is above average; it has risen year-on-year since 2012. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has been just below average. However, following assessments made by leaders, the proportion in 2014/15 is above average.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The academy did not meet the government's current floor standards for 2014. These are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- Following a re-brokering arrangement with the Department for Education (DfE), the academy has been sponsored by United Learning since September 2014.
- Under the sponsorship of United Learning, the academy is part of a multi-academy trust with Richard Rose Morton. Both academies share an Executive Principal. Support and challenge are provided to the academy by the sponsors, external consultants and through regular monitoring by representatives of the DfE.
- The academy works in partnership with Cumbria local authority to provide alternative provision at a pupil referral unit in Carlisle for a very small number of vulnerable students. Alternative provision is also provided two days per week for an equally small number of students at The Railway Community Gardens, also in Carlisle.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the good improvements made to the quality of teaching so that it is routinely good and leads to students making the best possible progress in their learning in all subjects, particularly mathematics, by:
 - ensuring the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers is closed
 - ensuring the information gained from the sharp identification of students with special educational needs and disabilities and those targeted for the highest grades is used routinely by all staff to challenge these students to achieve as well as they can
 - ensuring students use spelling and punctuation correctly across all subjects
 - allowing, as decided by the academy's policy, opportunities for students to respond to the increasing good quality marking and feedback
 - raising the attendance of students to at least national average levels
 - continuing the good reduction in persistent absenteeism
 - reducing exclusions further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- 'I have been a member of this academy since its opening and have been through the journey. I have never felt more confident about its future. Since the new sponsor has taken over, the improvements and the direction have vastly improved.' Such comments from staff, the great majority of whom were overwhelmingly positive in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, demonstrate the determination there is in the academy to make a difference to students' lives. This determination is evident in the school's emphasis on promoting equality of opportunity, on tackling discrimination in all its forms and in fostering good relations with all.
- The improvements are the result of good leadership. The headteacher has galvanised staff and built up relationships with students and their parents. The strong, focused drive of the Executive Principal, supported well by his senior leaders, is bringing about much faster rates of improvement than in the past, including in the sixth form. This is evident in the better progress being made by current students and in the increasing proportion of routinely good or better teaching. Pupil premium funding is used effectively and the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others are closing as a result.
- Leaders make effective use of performance management across the school. There is a strong sense of accountability. As a result, all staff have achieving the best possible outcomes for students as their core purpose. Rises up the pay scale are dependent on good teaching. There is no hiding place for underperformance.
- Leaders' focus on developing middle leadership is building up capacity well. In English and science, for example, weak subjects at the time of the January 2013 inspection, teaching quality has been improved. As a result, current students are making better progress in their learning. In English, Year 11 students are on course to secure the academy's best ever results at GCSE. In science, better teaching is attracting greater numbers of students to study the subject and its component branches.
- The leadership of mathematics has proved to be a challenge for the academy, as has staffing the department with subject specialists. Permanent leadership has been secured from September 2015. The acting leaders have met these challenges head on with the result that current students with non-specialist teachers are making at least expected and often good progress in this subject.
- Leaders have been successful in improving the attitudes, values and beliefs of the school. Student behaviour is much improved. The academy is a calm, orderly place.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Recent amendments provide opportunities for students to learn about subjects in great depth. In business studies, for example, Year 9 pupils embarked on their course in January 2015 giving them at least seven terms to attain the highest grades possible. Already, their progress is good. Additionally, in languages, students showing aptitude can study a second foreign language from Year 8. The promotion of good literacy skills is a key focus. However, while students write interesting sentences, opportunities to correct errors in spelling and punctuation are not always taken.
- The curriculum – taught and extra – supported by visiting speakers, a South Pole explorer, for example, also helps to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and instil a 'can do' attitude. One sixth form student, for example, having achieved second place in a national art competition organised by the sponsor, now has her work on display at an exhibition in Tokyo. All-in-all, students are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Guidance and support are given to students to help them transfer into Year 7 and make good choices about entering the sixth form or employment.
- The sponsors give high levels of commitment, support and challenge to the academy, including providing to leaders expertise and clarity about disadvantaged students. The gap between such students currently in the school and their peers is narrowing. The sponsors, through their representation on the school improvement board and the local governing body know the academy well, including the challenges still to be faced.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school improvement board and the local governing body work well together to hold leaders to account for the performance of teachers and students. They have a good understanding of the information about teaching, achievement, attendance and behaviour. Consequently, they ask searching questions and expect reasoned responses, including about pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding and why teachers have or have not moved up the pay scale. All this means, like senior leaders, they know the academy's strengths very well and can pinpoint accurately the most important areas to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. It is not good because exclusion rates, while improving, are still high. In part, this is due to a zero tolerance approach to disruptions to learning in class. The firm stance leaders are taking is leading to higher numbers of younger students being reported but a sharply declining trend as students move through the school. This shows that students are being instilled with the clear message: learning is not to be disrupted. Students themselves report the benefits. Those spoken with told inspectors that some disruption does occur but it is much less prevalent than in the past.
- Parents are increasingly positive about the behaviour of students. Just over three quarters responding to Parent View reported that the academy makes sure students are well behaved. The academy's own survey shows over 90% were of the view behaviour was improving. These views are supported by students spoken with during the inspection.
- The high expectations of students and their positive response were evident to inspectors during both days of the inspection. Students were well behaved, often very well so. They were mature, polite and considerate, getting on well with each other well in the atrium. In the main, they got to lessons on time and had the right equipment, enabling a quick start to learning. Generally, they take pride in their written work. They were also smart in their appearance and keen to tell inspectors how much they enjoyed life at the academy. All inspectors agreed the students represented the academy very well.
- Students spoken with had a good understanding of British values. For example, they understood people should be treated equally regardless of race, culture, religion or sexuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Nonetheless, because information about racist or homophobic name-calling is kept in different places by different personnel, leaders responsible for this aspect of the academy's work are not always in a position to present judgements on the impact of the measures taken to reduce such incidents. As a result of inspection, however, immediate action was taken to begin to rectify these shortcomings.
- Overall, parents express confidence in the academy's ability to keep their children safe and 87% of those responding to Parent View said their child felt safe. All responding to the academy's own survey were of this view. Without a doubt, leaders take the safety of students seriously. Support is given to students through lessons and visiting speakers, including the local police, on a range of pertinent issues, including e-safety. Students spoken with were confident they could talk to leaders, and particularly the safeguarding team, if they had concerns. Students' safety is also promoted with regular training for staff, on child sexual exploitation, for example. A presentation on the same subject has also been made available for parents.
- Attendance is improving but remains low. This means students not in school are missing out on the better quality teaching throughout the academy. Persistent absenteeism is also high. However, leaders have reduced this markedly through liaison with students, parents and external agencies. Case studies were seen, for example, of students with full attendance over the last half term.
- Good working relationships exist with external agencies, including the local pupil referral unit, to support vulnerable students. This is resulting in students continuing in education when otherwise they might be lost.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Inconsistency in the quality of teaching across the school means that current students make expected rather than good progress in learning. This is why teaching is not yet good. Inconsistencies include the way teachers use information to provide challenge for the most able students and support those who are disabled or with special educational needs to achieve as well as they can. Some teachers target such students in their planning and lessons, by asking them specific questions to draw out understanding, for example; others do not. The result is that the progress these students make is variable.
- Further inconsistencies include in the application of the academy's policies, for example in providing opportunities for students to respond to the increasingly good marking and feedback. Where this does not

occur, opportunities are missed to check students' understanding of what has been taught. The approach taken to ensure students spell and use punctuation correctly is also inconsistent. Some teachers expect corrections to be made; others do not. Where errors are not corrected, repetition is often the result. These errors mean that marks could be lost in examinations.

- Teaching quality, however, is getting better and at a good pace. Effective use of performance management and regular checking of quality by leaders have brought about this sea change. As a result, the rates of progress current students are making in their learning, including students who are disadvantaged, are also improving.
- Where teaching over time in the academy is good or better, teachers have routinely high expectations of all students regardless of need or background. They also make sure learning intentions are clear and activities are provided that help students remember what they have been taught and challenge them to deepen their understanding. In addition, teachers and adults question and prompt students to check understanding. This enables them to reshape their lessons accordingly to meet student needs well.
- Where teaching is successful, high standards of spelling, grammar and punctuation are expected at all times. Students show pride in their work – they want to do the very best they can. Furthermore, marking and feedback, written or oral, identify what has been done well and help students move on to the next stage of their learning. Where these features were present over time, inspectors saw good progress being made by all groups in students' books since September 2014.
- An example of good progress over time was captured with a Year 10 class studying mathematics. Work in books since September 2014 highlights teaching that has placed learning in an appropriate sequence. This, coupled with consistently well-matched tasks, has enabled the students to build on previous learning, deepen their understanding and use this as a springboard for harder work. The levels of concentration seen in the lesson were evident also in students' approach to tasks in their books. The good questioning by the teacher observed in the lesson was typical of the helpful marking seen over time. It is little wonder students in this class, regardless of disadvantage or need, are making good progress in the subject.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Current students entered the academy with prior attainment significantly below average. For students who left Year 11 in summer 2014, the gap was widest.
- Historical data of GCSE outcomes show in the main a picture of decline. In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's floor standards. This is the result of years of underachievement for this cohort. Too few students, including disadvantaged students, gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics. Not enough students made even expected progress from Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4.
- In the 2014 cohort, based on first entries in English, disadvantaged students were just over a grade behind their non-disadvantaged peers in school and about a grade and half behind nationally. In mathematics, they were just over a grade behind their peers in school, but two grades behind non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- The corner, though, has been turned. Current students are making at least expected progress in their learning across subjects. Following the implementation of recommendations of an externally commissioned review into the performance of disadvantaged students, the academy's data show gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers are closing and that the progress of disadvantaged students is accelerating. Inspectors agree with this analysis, not least in part because of the support given to such pupils, particularly in helping to raise their levels of attendance.
- Making use of external consultant challenge and support, the leader responsible for inclusion has identified clearly where disabled students or those with special educational needs are doing well and where they are in danger of falling behind. Appropriate packages of support are in place to support these students. While their progress is improving overall, it is inconsistent because not all teachers use the information they hold to challenge such students to do their best in their work.
- Likewise, the progress made by the most able students currently in the academy, while improving, is also inconsistent. More teachers, though, are targeting such students, including those with the potential to reach A grades, to push for A* grades. However, at this point, it is too soon to see the impact.
- The small number of students attending alternative provision are making strides in their personal and social development. This is keeping them in education and learning.
- The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

- Not all historical data are disappointing. In 2014, for example, although numbers entered were small, students of dance and languages achieved well. Likewise, students studying health and social care also achieved well.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- As reported by HMI in November 2014, the achievement of students in the sixth form is getting better year-on-year. In 2013 and 2014, students achieved close to average standards in academic subjects and well above average in vocational subjects. As in the main school, there is some inconsistency in the progress made by students. Strongest subjects in the sixth form include art and design, physical education, English, chemistry and physics. Leaders recognise mathematics as the weakest subject; however, improvements have been made.
- As in Years 7 to 11, teaching quality is improving. This is the result of good leadership. The improvement in teaching, coupled with students' work since September 2014, points to much that is good. Students, for example, are given good guidance on examination techniques to prepare them effectively for their ongoing and final assessments. Teachers' questioning models to students how to answer confidently. Consequently, current students are making better progress than students in the past.
- The attendance of students is improving but it is below average. Most, but not all students are punctual to lessons. Students are confident they are kept safe and, like their younger peers, demonstrated good behaviour during the inspection. Also like their peers, they showed their understanding, tolerance and respect for others well.
- Good opportunities exist for students to develop personal skills. Year 12 students benefit from participating in a range of activity in the Student Community Credits scheme, supporting staff supervising younger students in the Film Club, helping students in their English, mathematics and homework, or as acting as sports leaders in and out of school time, for example.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from the guidance given to them about career choices and further or higher education. An increasing proportion goes on to higher education.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135621
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	453815

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Beaty MBE
Headteacher	Derek Davies (Executive Principal), Neil Hutchinson (Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2013
Telephone number	01228 822060
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