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24 March 2010

Mr R Wallace  
Headteacher  
Richard Rose Central Academy  
Edgehill Road  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA1 3SL

Dear Mr Wallace

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Richard Rose Central Academy

Following my visit with Jan Bennett HMI and Peter Bannon, Mary Liptrot and Peter McKay, additional inspectors, to your academy on 22 and 23 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures in December 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive of the Federation and the academy's advisor at the Department for Children Schools and Families.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Richard Rose Central Academy

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 22-23 March 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work including 46 lessons, one assembly and six registrations; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, the Chief Executive of the Federation, staff, groups of students and parents' representatives.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

There is a relentless focus on raising the attainment of Year 11 students. Compared with last year's performance, early entries indicate a more promising picture at this stage since 25% of the cohort have already gained a grade C or above in English at GCSE. Detailed analyses of students' attainment across all subjects are carried out and progress in improving their performance is evaluated rigorously and frequently. A broad range of strategies are in place to help students do as well as possible such as mentoring, support to complete coursework, smaller teaching groups, revision classes, and subject conferences. In some instances, courses have been changed to give students more suitable opportunities to gain qualifications. For others, the number of courses being followed has been reduced to enable them to play to their strengths. Early examination entries also form part of the strategy for raising attainment in Years 9 and 10 with entries in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) planned for the coming term.

The academy is developing a suitable system for tracking the progress of students from their starting points on entry towards their expected performance at the end of Year 11. Staff are gradually getting to grips with this although assessments are not fully secure in all subjects and year groups. The ways in which assessment data are used to highlight strengths and weaknesses in provision and identify underachievement are extending and improving. More coherent and concerted approaches to addressing shortfalls and supporting students are developing gradually through the work of middle leaders, although the impact on learning is not evident across all subjects and key stages. It is clearer in Year 11 than elsewhere.

Overall, students' rates of progress are improving gradually but not with the rapidity or evenness required to make a substantial difference to their achievement over time. Several key factors are hindering improvement. The quality of learning is not rising with the speed required to enable students to make up for ground lost previously and increase their progress. In addition, rates of attendance remain low and a significant proportion of students, especially in Key Stage 4, are persistently absent.



## Sixth form

The quality of teaching and learning is improving: students confirm this. Staff absence has reduced and there is long-term cover by specialist teachers where necessary. In the best lessons, teachers use skilful questioning to stretch students' thinking, check understanding and tease out misconceptions. The positive impact of a more interactive approach to teaching is evident in physics where students' grades improved markedly in modular examinations taken this term. Students are increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning but in the less effective lessons they remain passive. Students are still feeling the effects of weak teaching in the past, but they are receiving very good support from current teachers, often given outside lessons, and this is helping them to progress.

Major changes to the sixth form curriculum are planned for September. The innovative new curriculum is more inclusive and caters for a much broader range of students than a traditional 'A' level programme. It offers students a tailored route to employment in their chosen vocational area and includes applied and academic courses at levels 2 and 3. Numbers of applications for the new courses are very promising.

The tracking of students' progress has been strengthened considerably since the last visit and there is more communication with parents. Support and monitoring are becoming increasingly personalised with carefully targeted intensive interventions. These improvements are reflected in accelerated progress by students. The monitoring and improvement of attendance remains a priority. Although systems are well established for monitoring individual students' attendance, glitches in the electronic attendance system have prevented managers from identifying patterns of absence and taking necessary action quickly. A robust system is now in place, however. Lesson observations have already highlighted a link between the quality of teaching and attendance at lessons.

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the sixth form, know the strengths and areas for development, and prioritise well. There is an unrelenting drive for improvement.

## Other relevant student outcomes

Students' behaviour and attitudes continue to improve. Some of the negative attitudes resulting from difficulties experienced in the early stages of the academy's life are giving way to a more optimistic view of the opportunities for learning and personal development provided. The majority of students understand and accept the expectations enshrined in the code of conduct; the 'Richard Rose Way' is gaining credibility as students identify more closely with the academy's aims and purpose. In lessons, teachers are applying the behaviour management system more consistently and rigorously; students are adamant that misbehaviour disrupts their learning far



less frequently. Referrals to internal exclusion and the reflection room show a downward trend though some peaks occur as teachers raise the bar for expected behaviour. Intensive and unremitting support and intervention for challenging students in Year 8 are beginning to take effect and, though progress is uneven with frequent setbacks, trends are positive. Fixed-term exclusions for more serious misbehaviour, although still too high, are falling rapidly.

However, whilst the great majority of students are at least compliant in lessons, this is no substitute for enthusiasm and the engagement in learning needed to sustain significant improvement in attainment and achievement. Where teaching lacks stimulus and challenge, some students quickly become inattentive and restless, make minimal effort and resort too often to inappropriate behaviour. More seriously, a small minority of students are reluctant to engage whatever the quality of the teaching and are quite prepared to wilfully disrupt the course of a lesson. Not all teachers use the agreed strategies to manage behaviour effectively.

Students' behaviour as they move around the academy is generally orderly and considerate, though occasionally boys are a little too boisterous. At break and lunchtimes most students show they are capable of managing their own behaviour when, of necessity given the lack of communal areas, they occupy stairs and corridors. Students say they have no concerns about bullying or their own personal safety.

A clearly defined management structure for behaviour support is enabling a move to more proactive strategies as staff grow into their new roles. There is a greater focus on identifying those students at risk of disaffection who can be targeted with specific help and support closely tailored to their needs. The academy has good evidence of the effectiveness of individual intervention in promoting improvement in both the personal development and academic progress of some of its most challenging students.

The academy has worked hard to put procedures in place to improve students' attendance and punctuality. There is an improving trend in punctuality since September and especially in the last few months. The reduction in the number of students arriving late is greatest in Year 9, as a result of increased contact with home. This strategy is now being rolled out in other year groups.

Attendance is rising slowly but remains low. The academy has implemented many strategies to increase attendance in addition to the targeted support, in school and at home, for students who are persistently absent. The importance of regular attendance is a focus of assemblies and registration periods. The improved communication between attendance staff, guidance leaders, heads of year and key stage managers through regular team meetings is enabling careful evaluation of specific needs and identification of appropriate support from external agencies. This is beginning to have a positive effect with some individuals. Although there has been



some success in reducing the number of those who are persistently absent in some year groups, the overall proportion of such students has not fallen significantly. There remains a large hard core of students where truancy has become an established pattern over a number of years for themselves and their siblings.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve achievement and raise the quality of provision in the sixth form to at least satisfactory – satisfactory
- improve the behaviour and attitudes of students by building relationships and applying agreed procedures consistently – satisfactory
- improve attendance and punctuality to lessons – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Progress in improving teaching and learning was not clearly evident at this visit. Whilst lesson planning is uniform and contains information about what students have learned previously, inconsistency remains in how well this information is used to provide activities that challenge all individuals or groups within classes so that they achieve well. Learning objectives are shared with students but too often their active involvement in assessing how well they are doing in reaching these is limited. In a minority of lessons expectations of behaviour and what students can achieve are too low.

In the most fruitful lessons observed, students were actively engaged and enjoyed tasks; they worked well independently and in groups. The clear understanding of grade criteria, for example in performing arts lessons, was helpful in motivating students to aim high and play an active part in their learning including assessing how well they were doing. There was good use of instructors in ICT where students in Year 7 were inspired to be resourceful in finding information to write about their home town. Teachers regularly use new technology to present information to students but some opportunities were missed to use it interactively to improve progress. In too many lessons students were passive, often when teachers talked for too long. Where work was uninteresting and lacked challenge students often misbehaved and teachers were not able to manage this well enough to keep them on task. Progress in lessons in the core subjects was variable with too little evident in science because of weak teaching.

The new head of access has made some well-founded changes in the way provision works for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and acknowledges that there is more to do. She has a vision for the future and is enthusiastic about the benefits changes will bring. However, in this transitional period there is a lack of clarity for teachers about how the system works.

More work is needed to improve the quality of registration periods. These are used variously to check planners, give notices, for assembly and activities such as quizzes.



However, there exists considerable variation in the value of this provision. Some registrations observed did not prepare students well for a day focused on good learning because activities were desultory and unacceptable behaviour was permitted.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of all aspects of teaching and learning – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is resolute in his drive to embed leadership and management systems and processes that are fit for the academy's long-term purposes. Changes continue to be made to the senior leadership team so that it is increasingly streamlined to the academy's situation. The deputy headteacher plays a pivotal role through, for example, the gathering and interpretation of assessment information and the development of the work of middle leaders. This has been a key focus of the academy's work in recent months.

Subject leaders are being held properly to account through the line management system, which is becoming more consistent in operation. They have received a range of suitable training in the skills required to assure the quality of their subject areas and are gradually playing a greater role in the analysis of data on students' progress. The effectiveness of these analyses, and the subsequent actions taken, varies considerably. In the main, the impact on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating students' progress is limited. In part this is because the systems have not been in operation for long, but is also due to wide disparities in the rigour of their application. The reluctance of some teachers to recognise that they are accountable for the performance of students in their classes is contributing to limited improvement in this area. Although there are variations, phase and year leaders are increasingly rising to the challenge presented by the academic focus of their responsibilities. Their data analyses are generally more sophisticated and based on both academic outcomes and information about students' personal development. These are beginning to provide the basis for a more holistic approach to raising students' achievement.

The impact of the academy's specialism is evident in the support provided by the head of specialism for developments in science, particularly linked to quality assurance and management systems. It is, however, in the main limited to this.

The governing body is running efficiently under the firm leadership of the Chief Executive. It is increasingly taking strategic decisions from the perspective of the federation and this is potentially beneficial, for instance with regard to recruitment.

The improvements in the academy's engagement with parents noted at the previous visit have been sustained. Parents report that day-to-day contact with the academy



is much easier through a range of methods including email and text messaging. The Parents' Voice group continues to be active and has worked with the academy in designing the new progress reports. These have been well received because they provide a much more personalised and informative picture of students' academic progress and personal qualities. In the light of experience, the Parents' Voice group is also working closely with the academy to produce a 'guide for parents by parents'. This will include basic information about key contacts and procedures and be trialled initially with Year 7 parents in September. The plan is to make it available to all when the academy moves to new premises next year. Links have been established between the Parents' Voice group and the governing body through the regular review of, and response to, minuted issues.

Systems to ensure the safety and well-being of students are fully in place and all statutory requirements are met. Records pertaining to health and safety and safe recruitment of staff are well maintained. Staff have received the appropriate training and are familiar with guidance procedures in child protection issues. The students say that they feel safe and secure in the academy.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that the roles of leaders are identified clearly and their responsibilities understood to increase their effectiveness – satisfactory
- improve communication particularly between the academy and parents and carers – satisfactory
- prioritise, as a matter of urgency, the safety and well-being of all students and ensure that all procedures for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements – this issue has been dealt with.

External support

The academy is benefiting from the support and challenge of the School Improvement Partner who has led a second wide-ranging review of the quality of teaching and learning. This has provided the academy with evidence of the impact of training as well as further areas for development. Support from consultants has been sustained, to strengthen the senior leadership team and assist in developing their capacity.

Priorities for further improvement:

- eradicate inadequate teaching and learning
- establish a good climate for learning through the effective use of tutor periods at the start of each day.

