

Richard Rose Morton Academy

Wigton Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 6LB

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal's leadership is strong, effective and inspirational. He has developed a strong team of leaders, which has enhanced the school's capacity for improvement. Senior leaders provide good support and challenge for staff.
- Leaders have improved the school significantly since the last inspection and have successfully tackled all the issues identified.
- Teaching overall is good. As a result, most pupils currently in the school make good progress from their starting points. Pupils achieve well in most subjects across the curriculum. In English and mathematics, their progress is improving rapidly.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are safe and happy in school. The school is a harmonious community where pupils show good respect for one another and for staff.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes to learning. They work hard and take pride in their work. Leaders have successfully reduced exclusions this year.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the school. They are well informed and hold senior leaders firmly to account for the quality of education provided. Governors support the school proactively.
- The school's work with disadvantaged pupils is increasingly effective. As a result, the achievement of these pupils is improving rapidly. However, there remain differences between their performance and that of their peers in some subjects and in some year groups.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop pupils' verbal communication, although this is a key element in what leaders expect of teaching. This hampers the progress that some pupils make.
- A small number of lower-attaining pupils do not make the progress expected of them because they have difficulties with literacy.
- The school has had some success in improving attendance. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are frequently absent remains too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing work with disadvantaged pupils to ensure that differences in achievement between this group and other pupils in school and nationally diminish further.
- Take further steps to improve the literacy skills of a small number of lower-attaining pupils, so that the quality of their written work improves and they make better progress in all subjects.
- Take steps to develop pupils' verbal communication skills by:
 - helping teachers to develop more probing questions which deepen pupils' thinking and understanding
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities in lessons to express their opinions and discuss ideas, in line with the school's policy.
- Build on existing practice to improve overall attendance, especially in Year 9, and reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal provides inspirational and effective leadership. He and his fellow leaders have tackled the areas for development raised in the previous inspection with determination and rigour. There is no complacency. As a result, the school has improved significantly. The great majority of parents and staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires are supportive of the principal and his senior team.
- The principal has developed a strong team of senior leaders who have enhanced the school's capacity for sustained improvement. They provide effective support and challenge to teachers and middle leaders. Staff at all levels fully understand what leaders expect of them and the great majority meet these expectations. Leaders take robust action to challenge and support colleagues who do not meet expected standards. Governors do not approve salary increases to staff when their performance does not merit this.
- As a result of the concerted actions taken by leaders and governors, Morton Academy has raised the standards achieved by its pupils incrementally over the last four years. In 2017, pupils achieved the school's best-ever GCSE results.
- The school is strengthening its middle leadership, which is increasingly effective. The school has some strong subject leaders. Recently appointed leaders, for example in English, are already making a difference to their subjects. Senior leaders have worked with and developed those few middle leaders who needed support; they are gradually bringing these colleagues up to the level of the strongest leaders, with the result that departmental leadership in their subjects has improved. In most subjects, teaching is now good and pupils make good progress.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is strong. Leaders have developed a system of planning in lessons which enables teachers to prepare activities based around the various levels of ability in their classes. This process is already well embedded across the curriculum and almost all teachers are using it effectively to drive forward pupils' achievement.
- The school has placed significant emphasis on the professional development of staff. A successful coaching programme is available to all, regardless of their needs and abilities. This has ensured that those teachers who needed to improve their practice have done so and the school has also retained the great majority of its teachers. In an area of the country where teacher recruitment can be difficult, this stability in staffing has been a particularly valuable achievement.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the school robustly. They have an accurate knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they visit lessons regularly and frequently examine the quality of work in pupils' books. Senior leaders regularly meet with subject leaders to hold them to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subjects.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to support staff in raising the achievement and improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This has allowed staff to personalise their work for these pupils to address barriers to learning. Disadvantaged pupils now

make much better progress as a result of the school's concerted efforts and their improved attendance. However, more work is needed to improve the achievement and attendance of the disadvantaged cohort further.

- Leaders use the funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. These pupils generally make good progress and are well supported. Leaders recognised that the use of Year 7 catch-up funding, which is aimed at improving the literacy and numeracy of pupils who arrive with low levels in these aspects, was not always having the desired impact. Consequently, leaders took the decision to give English and mathematics teachers more time to work with these pupils. This more effective use of the funding has resulted in an improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have created a harmonious ethos in which pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils' behaviour is good and is very well managed. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are strong. Teachers have decorated the school's atrium and corridors with stunning artwork produced by the pupils themselves. This has created a very special, colourful and stimulating environment which the pupils themselves enjoy.
- Over recent years, the rate of exclusions and the persistent absence of some groups of pupils have been too high. Leaders' actions significantly reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions last year. Attendance overall is improving steadily and is now close to the national average. There is more work to do to reduce the persistent absence of a small group of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school's curriculum is largely broad and balanced, although a few pupils in key stage 3 do not yet have the opportunity to study a language and only a small number of pupils study music. The curriculum offers a suitable mix of academic and vocational subjects. Leaders have designed it so that it meets the needs of the pupils. For example, the school's engineering option links pupils with local firms in Carlisle and permits the possibility of apprenticeships.
- The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress because it now builds in stronger levels of challenge. Leaders are encouraging greater numbers of pupils to opt for the academic English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. For example, uptake of modern foreign languages at key stage 4 is improving as a result.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum includes lessons which focus on ethics and values. Pupils make good use of the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and those of other cultures and religions. They learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. The school charter sets pupils an ambitious, aspirational programme which encourages them to participate in a range of activities and to take part in the wider life of the school. Pupils undertake 'Morton Milestones', which aim to develop their character and resilience. For example, Year 7 pupils must give a presentation to their year group about how they have settled into school, Year 9 take part in the 'Seven Billion Ideas' competition, while Year 10 pupils take part in a 50-mile walk. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities which are supporting and encouraging pupils' personal development.
- The sponsor, United Learning, provides good support and challenge. Its staff, including its regional director, keep a close eye on standards being achieved at Morton Academy

and they intervene to support where necessary. For example, the sponsor has a team of specialist subject advisers who offer support to departments. The sponsor's trustees also work closely with the governing body.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong and effective.
- Governors have played a strong role in improving the school. They approach their responsibilities with great professional rigour and have ensured that the school moved forward from requiring improvement to good. Governors check that leaders are never complacent.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders and managers firmly to account and ask challenging questions about pupils' progress. They regularly review pupils' performance data, so they have a sound awareness of how well pupils are performing and where the priorities for development lie.
- Governors provide proactive support for the school. For example, some serve as 'link governors' to departments, supporting the subject leaders and teachers. Governors told an inspector that they regularly tour the school to see its work in action for themselves. This gives them a deeper insight into the quality of provision.
- Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the governing body. Some also serve on the board of trustees of the sponsor, which ensures that there are strong links between these two bodies. Governors play a key role in setting the vision and direction of the school. They have a good knowledge of the school's finances. They check that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used appropriately.
- Governors have not ensured that the school's website fully matches the guidance on what academies should publish. However, during the inspection, leaders made efforts to rectify the omissions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The school's safeguarding policies and practices are strong. Leaders actively promote a culture of vigilance where pupils' safety and welfare are paramount. Safeguarding and child protection are very high priorities.
- The school has rigorous checking procedures in place for child protection. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and child protection, training is updated regularly and they know what to do if a child is at risk. Record-keeping is thorough.
- Staff have had training on 'Prevent', the government's programme for preventing radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example through e-safety initiatives.
- Governors are suitably trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.
- The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to keep pupils secure

and safe from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Leaders judge that teaching over time is usually good. Inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books in a range of subjects across the curriculum, also shows that teaching is typically good. Pupils confirmed to inspectors that the teaching that they receive is usually effective. As a result of stronger teaching, most groups of pupils currently in school are now making faster progress.
- Leaders have put significant emphasis on improving teaching. A key feature of the school's work has been its coaching programme, which is also supported by advisers provided by the sponsor. The school has used some of its best teachers to support and develop others' practice. All staff, whatever their ability or their need, are invited to take part. As a result, many teachers have improved their teaching.
- Leaders have introduced a system to ensure a consistent approach to planning. Consequently, teachers now focus more closely on the needs of the pupils by linking activities to their abilities and previous learning. Leaders have succeeded in embedding this system across the whole school and almost all teachers are using it. As a result, most teachers are successfully moving learning on from pupils' previous starting points. Pupils told inspectors that they like the process and inspectors judged that it is helping pupils of different abilities to make good progress. A few teachers are still developing these skills to ensure accuracy in their judgements.
- Teachers mainly have high expectations of their pupils. Levels of challenge are generally high, especially for middle-ability pupils and the most able. For example, in a Year 10 English class, the teacher asked pupils to define the meanings of words such as 'socialism' and 'laissez-faire' in the context of Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' and to discuss how these were conveyed in the play. His effective, sharp questioning made pupils think quickly. In art, teachers made their expectations of high levels of performance very clear to pupils. As a result, the quality of many pupils' artwork is exceptional. Pupils in key stage 4 confirmed that they are usually challenged sufficiently. Work seen in their books generally echoed this.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. The teaching of mathematics is good and teachers expect pupils to use mathematical language with precision.
- Teachers often give close attention to supporting weaker learners, for example in Year 11 mathematics, where the teacher's carefully structured support for the pupils in small group work enabled them to make good progress. However, inspectors saw examples of work in books in several subjects where lower-attaining pupils were not making the progress expected of them. Principally, this was because of poor literacy and an inability to write well. Although the school has good literacy programmes in place in the lower school, which are helping to raise pupils' attainment, it needs to do more to develop the literacy skills of a few of the older pupils. The development of literacy is the major element in the school's 'feedback ladder', which all teachers are expected to follow. However, some teaching does not focus enough on improving the presentation, handwriting and spelling of a small number of lower-attaining pupils.

- Leaders also expect teachers to develop pupils' 'spoken literacy' in their lessons. However, this is not fully consistent across the school. Inspectors saw some teaching where teachers did not develop pupils' verbal communication skills and where pupils had few opportunities to discuss opinions and ideas. Similarly, some teachers do not ask probing questions which encourage pupils to think about topics in greater depth.
- Teachers work successfully to promote and develop pupils' reading in many subjects. Pupils read widely in form time. Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to take part in a national initiative to 'find a book that will change their life'.
- Pupils behave well and show positive interest in their work and good application. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are universally very positive. Most pupils take a pride in their work and look after their books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe, including online. Pupils who met inspectors said that bullying is rare and that staff deal with it effectively if it ever arises. The school has recorded few bullying incidents this year. Pupils said that there is little racism or homophobic bullying and school records confirm this. A strong framework of pastoral support is in place to safeguard pupils' welfare.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are courteous and respectful. Their positive attitudes help to create and maintain the school's harmonious ethos. Most take pride in their work and are eager to make it better, which helps to move their learning on.
- Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance throughout the school. This enables them to develop a good understanding of the broad range of careers open to them. They are well prepared for life after secondary school. The school works proactively with outside organisations to promote careers programmes. All Year 10 pupils do work experience. The majority of pupils say that they have good access to careers guidance. The school has reduced the proportion of pupils leaving who are not yet in education, employment or training.
- School staff supervise the welfare and progress of the small number of pupils attending alternative provision and ensure that they are attending.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During the inspection, pupils moved around the school site responsibly and maturely, and they behaved well at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and the great majority arrive at lessons punctually and are ready and willing to learn. To a large extent, pupils' behaviour during the inspection was self-regulated by the pupils themselves. All staff who completed the

online questionnaire, a substantial proportion of the staff, said that behaviour is always good and that leaders manage it well. Parents also feel that behaviour is managed successfully.

- The number of fixed-term exclusions in recent years had been too high and the school unfortunately needed to exclude six pupils permanently in 2016/17. However, the overall rate for fixed-term exclusions has dropped sharply in the last 12 months, including for disadvantaged pupils. School records show that the numbers of behavioural incidents and referrals to the school's internal isolation unit have also dropped significantly.
- The school has a strong team whose dedicated role is to improve attendance. It employs a range of valid strategies and is having some success. Overall attendance has been rising steadily over the last three years and in 2016/17 it was close to the national average. The attendance of pupils in Year 9 is not as high and needs further improvement. Persistent absence rates have dropped. Last year, the overall figure was below the national average. However, persistent absence rates remain too high for the disadvantaged pupils.
- There is very little lateness to school or lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the time of the previous inspection pupils' progress was judged to require improvement. This is no longer the case. As a result of stronger teaching, pupils now make good progress across subjects and key stages.
- Early indications show that the school's Progress 8 score (the new national measure by which secondary school performance is assessed) rose substantially in 2017. Unconfirmed figures suggest that the school's progress was above the national average. This was achieved with a Year 11 cohort of average ability. Pupils made better progress in most subjects, including in English and mathematics, than they had in 2016 or any year previously.
- Early figures show that the overall progress made by disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, was very close to average in 2017. This represents a significant improvement over time for this group of pupils, reflecting the stringent efforts that the school has made to raise their achievement. As a result, differences between the achievement of the disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers in school diminished last year. However, differences still remained too wide in English, mathematics and science.
- Most-able pupils achieved well in 2017. Inspectors found good evidence in pupils' books to show that teachers in most subjects challenge the most able to perform at high levels and to make good progress.
- Improvement can also be seen in examination results. The school has steadily and incrementally increased the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in English and mathematics combined over the past four years. In 2017, pupils achieved the school's best ever GCSE results for this combined measure and early indications show that the outcome, now using the new 9-4 grading equivalent, was close to the

national average. Pupils also attained well in both English and mathematics separately, again realising the school's best ever results.

- The school's assessment information, confirmed by a scrutiny of work in pupils' books, shows that current pupils make good progress in most subjects, including in English and mathematics. School information shows that current Year 11 pupils, who had lower starting points than previous year groups, are already making better progress in most subjects than pupils were achieving at the same time last year. In other year groups, most pupils are also making strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are also already making faster progress this year. Differences between the performance of disadvantaged groups and that of their peers continue to diminish. However, leaders readily acknowledge that they need to do more to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in some subjects in younger year groups.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress from their starting points. In 2017, the results of national assessments show that these pupils achieved good outcomes and improved their attainment. Current cohorts continue to achieve well.
- Most pupils who are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding make good progress with improving their literacy or numeracy. The school's good literacy programmes develop literacy skills effectively in the lower school. However, a few lower-attaining pupils in key stage 4 have weak levels of literacy, which is a barrier to their learning in other subjects.
- The small number of pupils attending alternative provision are making the progress expected of them.
- The school is preparing its pupils well for the next stage of education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135620
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10036780

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	539
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Robson
Principal	Des Bird
Telephone number	01228 822633
Website	www.rrma.org.uk/
Email address	des.bird@rrma.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 October 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its accessibility plan or about the statutory equality objectives in its equality policy.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the amount of Year 7 catch-up funding in the previous academic year and this year.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is low compared to national figures.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is close to the national average.
- The overall proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly higher than the national average.

- In 2016 and in 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.
- The school has placed a small number of pupils in alternative provision in school with Progress Schools Limited, which is a registered provider. A small number of pupils also attend the Local Authority Home and Hospital Tuition Service.
- Richard Rose Morton Academy is a member of the United Learning multi-academy trust, which is the sponsor.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. They visited form time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised a sample of work provided by senior leaders. Inspectors listened to Year 7 and Year 8 pupils reading.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors. The lead inspector also met with the regional director for the sponsor.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; safeguarding procedures; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website to check whether it met requirements.
- The team took account of the 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the 44 free-text responses received from parents. Inspectors also took account of the 38 responses to the staff online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tanya Sheaff	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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