

# John Ruskin College

## Reinspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 130434

**Name of lead inspector:** Harriet Harper HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 6 May 2011

**Type of provider:** Sixth form college

**Address:** Selsdon Park Road  
London  
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## Information about the provider

1. John Ruskin College is located in south Croydon. It is unusual in that, as a sixth form college, it offers only vocational courses. As of 2010/11, it withdrew its AS- and A-level provision. The college offers courses in health and social care, applied science, business, information and communication technology, sport, hairdressing and beauty, arts and media, literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages. Train to Gain, offered in previous years, is being phased out in the current academic year.
2. The college has around 1,000 full-time students, approximately 88% of whom are aged 16 to 18. It has enrolled 151 pupils aged 14 and 15 on a range of courses. Some 38% of students are studying at advanced level, around 40% at intermediate and 22% at entry level. Students travel to the college from a wide geographical area, mostly to the north of Croydon, and approximately 90% of them are from minority ethnic groups.
3. In March 2010, Ofsted judged the college to be inadequate. At that time, outcomes and leadership and management were inadequate, whilst other key aspects were satisfactory. Of the four subject areas inspected, two were inadequate: science and mathematics and business, administration and law.
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the college:
  - Protec Sports Ltd (sport).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16 Further education (16 to 18)	67 learners 839 full-time learners
<b>Provision for adult learners:</b> Further education (19+)	210 full-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain	360 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3

### Subject Areas

Science	3
Business	3

## Overall effectiveness

- John Ruskin College is a satisfactory college. Until last year, too few students achieved their qualifications and many aspects of the college's work were poor. Throughout 2010/11, however, and especially since the arrival of a new principal, determined efforts have been made to raise standards. Indeed, managers' actions over the last year have led to significant improvements in students' achievements.
- By creating a purely vocational sixth-form college, managers have increased the proportion of students successfully completing their qualifications. However, they have reduced the courses on offer to a relatively narrow range. They have ensured that students are no longer enrolled onto inappropriate courses. With good teaching, good support and revised quality systems, there are signs that retention, attendance and punctuality are beginning to improve. College staff are only too aware that these remain areas for further improvement.
- The Principal and senior management team provide strong and supportive leadership. Self-assessment is comprehensive and largely accurate. Staff are positive about the recent change in culture, with its emphasis on high standards and high expectations. Financial management is sound, value for money is

satisfactory, and the way in which governors review how well the college is doing has improved.

8. Students are kept safe and there is an appropriate emphasis on the promotion of equality and diversity. Students and staff value being part of a respectful, harmonious and diverse college community. Most students are proud of their college and keen to play a part in how it is run.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. The proportion who successfully completed long courses at all levels rose in 2009/10. Improvements at advanced level were particularly notable and above the most recent national average for similar provision in colleges of further education. Although improved, the proportion of students who successfully completed their courses at entry and foundation level remained low, as did the proportion who achieved functional skills qualifications.
- Teaching and learning are good and inspectors observed examples of outstanding practice. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and this has had a demonstrable impact on students' achievements.
- The most effective lessons provide well-designed activities to engage and motivate students, enabling them to make good progress. However, not all teaching is of a high standard and, in some lessons, tasks are insufficiently challenging and/or poor attendance and punctuality impede learning.
- The extent to which the college meets the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. The college acknowledges the need to review its curriculum offer, particularly at foundation level, in order to provide students with more choice and progression opportunities.
- The college has effective links with other organisations, although work with employers remains an area for further development. While many students participate in work placements, there are not sufficient opportunities for all those who might benefit to take part in real work experiences.
- Care, support and guidance are good. Revised recruitment arrangements have helped to ensure that students are placed on the most suitable course given their prior attainment and aspirations. Additional support for those who need it is timely and effective in helping students to achieve their qualifications. Advanced-level students benefit from good guidance on applying to higher education.
- Leadership and management are good. The new Principal and his senior management team have brought about a change in culture since the previous inspection and there is a palpable sense of urgency amongst staff about the desire to continue to raise standards. There have been considerable improvements to the way the college assures the quality of its courses, and this is leading to improvements.

- Governance is satisfactory, as is value for money. The college has appropriate policies in place to meet its statutory duties with regard to equalities legislation, although monitoring and action planning in this area are not well developed. Equality and diversity are promoted well in many curriculum areas.

### **What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?**

- Raise success rates on foundation level programmes by ensuring that teaching and assessment on these courses are of a consistently high standard.
- Ensure that all students successfully improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills as well as achieving qualifications in these significant areas through rigorous implementation of the college's Skills for Life strategy.
- Improve students' attendance and punctuality through rigorous and consistent implementation of college-wide procedures by all teachers.
- Improve students' ability to link theory to practice by developing more extensive and productive partnerships with employers across all curriculum areas.
- Extend choice and progression opportunities for students by reviewing the college's curriculum offer.
- Improve further the promotion of equality and diversity by developing more systematic and detailed monitoring and action planning for this aspect.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- the welcoming environment, in which they feel safe
- friendly and approachable teachers
- the support provided for their studies
- contributing to decisions about the life of the college
- industry-standard hairdressing and media production facilities
- the opportunity to make new friends
- preparation for progression to higher education and employment
- visible and approachable senior staff.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- electronic individual learning plans, so that they can access them from home
- the slow speed of computers
- the limited access to enrichment activities
- overcrowding in the canteen and common room.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

9. The college's capacity to improve is good. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. The new leadership team has halted a long period of decline and successfully introduced a significantly revised curriculum and more effective quality systems. Teaching, learning and support are good and initiatives to improve students' retention, attendance, behaviour and punctuality are beginning to work. Most significantly, a higher proportion of students gained qualifications in 2009/10 than in previous years and provision in science and business is now satisfactory, having been inadequate at the time of the previous inspection.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

10. Following the change from primarily AS- and A-level courses to vocational provision, success rates for long courses rose at all levels in 2009/10. At advanced level, they improved significantly to above average when compared with similar provision in colleges of further education. Although much improved, success rates at entry and foundation levels remain low.
11. The improved success rates on long courses reflect a rise in achievement, particularly at foundation and advanced levels, but not in retention. Those who remain at the college for the full duration of their course are generally successful in gaining their qualifications, including pupils aged 14 to 16. Many students on advanced-level courses make excellent progress, given their prior attainment.
12. While success rates improved in 2009/10 in most curriculum areas, they remained low in Skills for Life. Too few students were successful in gaining qualifications in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages and only a small proportion of those who took GCSE mathematics gained a grade A\* to C.
13. College managers have identified some small discrepancies between the rates of retention and achievement for different groups of students analysed by ethnicity, gender and support needs, and have instigated appropriate action to tackle these.
14. The development of economic and social well-being is satisfactory. An increasing proportion of students benefit from work placements, visits and industry-standard resources, and the majority of those on advanced-level courses progress to higher education. Students work safely and report that they feel safe. Attendance and punctuality, however, are low and below the college's own target.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good. The very best teaching is outstanding, characterised by meticulous planning, excellent classroom management and imaginative tasks. Typically, in the less effective lessons, teachers are adept at using a range of approaches and activities but do not focus on ensuring that all students are sufficiently challenged. In a minority of cases, the flow of the lesson is disrupted by students' poor punctuality, attendance and/or behaviour.
16. Assessment practice is satisfactory. In lessons, teachers make good use of questioning and assessment tasks to check students' understanding. The quality of feedback on written assignments is variable and in some cases fails to provide students with sufficient guidance as to how to improve their work.
17. The college's response to meeting the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. The college has an appropriate range of advanced-level programmes, fewer courses at intermediate level and limited provision at entry and foundation levels. Students enrol on courses to improve their literacy and numeracy and to gain functional skills qualifications but, with changes to the college's curriculum offer, they no longer have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics or English at the college.
18. A high proportion of pupils aged 14 to 16 are successful in gaining a qualification but few progress on to further study at the college. Progression from advanced courses to higher education is good. The college's positive and flexible approach to meeting the needs of pupils not placed with local schools, or in danger of exclusion, is valued highly by the local authority. Young students with children benefit from a crèche run by a pupil referral unit which shares the college site.
19. Enrichment activities are limited, primarily due to the fact that most of the mainstream vocational courses are run over three full days, to minimise the extent to which students are in college but not in lessons. This, in turn, restricts the time available for other activities, such as sport or music. Just over half of the students attend some form of work placement but there are insufficient opportunities for work experience in some subject areas.
20. The college works effectively with other organisations. For example, the college ran an adult literacy programme for parents of the children at a local childcare centre and this helped the parents to participate more fully in the life of the centre. Links with employers are productive, but limited. A college-wide employer engagement strategy is in the early stages of development.
21. Care, guidance and support for students are good. Initial diagnosis of additional support that students may need in order to complete their studies successfully is timely and students speak highly of the support they receive. Advice and guidance and induction arrangements are good and there has been a significant reduction in the current academic year in the number of students transferring from one course to another.

22. The tutorial system has been strengthened significantly and students benefit from good pastoral support which they value highly. The recently-developed electronic personal learning plans are used well for monitoring attendance and progress and for setting targets, and this is beginning to have a positive effect on students' attitude to their work.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

23. The Principal and the senior leadership team provide strong leadership and a clear strategic direction. They promote high standards and high expectations across the college. From July 2010 a restructured management team has led to greater clarity over roles and responsibilities, with a shared sense of purpose and a very strong focus on securing improvements for students. An updated and comprehensive three-year development plan clearly identifies the college's mission, values and planned future direction, as well as key measures of performance which governors and managers are using effectively to track and monitor improvements.
24. Performance management is well developed. Staff at all levels work to clear and often challenging targets, which they regularly review with their line managers. Internal communication is good. Staff and students are well informed, as well as fully supportive of the carefully considered and effective changes and developments implemented over the past twelve months. Students at the college greatly value the fact that staff at all levels, including senior managers, are approachable, open and willing to listen to and act on their feedback.
25. In 2010/11 the college exceeded its enrolment targets for pupils aged 14 to 16 and adult learners but failed by 18% to meet its target for the enrolment of students aged 16 to 18. Work to improve and further develop Skills for Life across the college has not yet had sufficient impact.
26. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are actively involved in setting the mission and strategic direction of the college and took a clear lead in the repositioning of the college in offering a more vocationally-focused curriculum from September 2010. In 2010/11, governors are implementing substantial changes to the way they operate in order to monitor more effectively all aspects of the college's work. Governors are now well informed about the performance of the college in its work with students and provide effective support and challenge.
27. Arrangements for safeguarding students are good and given a high priority. All staff and governors undergo training to update them on safeguarding issues, with members of the college's safeguarding committee having more in-depth training. Students feel safe at the college and staff take prompt and appropriate action to respond to their concerns and individual circumstances, as well as providing a high level of specific individual support for students. Increasingly, staff make use of the college's disciplinary procedures where appropriate to address any unacceptable behaviour exhibited by students. The college has



incorporated changes to safeguarding policies and procedures to take account of the needs of pupils aged 14 to 16 who attend the college.

28. The college's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate policies are in place and the college meets its statutory requirements. A newly reconstituted equality and diversity committee is in place from September 2010 to develop further work in this area. The analysis of data with regard to equality and diversity is thorough and the college carefully monitors whether any groups perform less well than others. In the few instances where this is the case, the college is taking effective measures to improve the achievement of these groups of students.
29. Staff and students value the culture of respect which is prevalent across the college and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The promotion of equality and diversity is good in many subject areas. Managers and course teams do not yet systematically monitor the promotion of equality and diversity or plan well enough to secure improvements.
30. Governors, the Principal and staff at all levels across the college welcome and encourage feedback from students. In particular, full-time students, the majority of whom are aged 16 to 18, have good opportunities to contribute appropriately to decision making and to provide feedback to staff, and are very aware of resulting actions and improvements. Arrangements to engage more fully with adult learners, pupils aged 14 to 16 and employers are not as fully developed.
31. From September 2010, the college has successfully implemented highly effective processes for monitoring and evaluating the performance of students and staff across the college. Staff are highly supportive of the new quality measures which are already having a demonstrable impact on securing improvements for students. The analysis and use of data to improve performance are good. At college and subject level, quality improvement planning and monitoring are extensive and very effective.
32. Staff and students contribute effectively to the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and generally accurate in identifying the college's key strengths and areas for improvement.
33. Value for money is satisfactory. The college has significantly reduced its deficit from its previously high level and outcomes for students are now satisfactory. The college carefully manages its resources, balancing the need to secure improvements in equipment and accommodation, with the need to keep spending under control.

## Subject areas

### Science

### Grade 3

#### Context

34. The college offers applied science courses at three levels, with 61 students enrolled on the BTEC national diploma, 12 on the BTEC first diploma and 6 on the foundation science course.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes are good and reflect an improvement on previous years, although a three-year trend analysis masks the changed nature of the curriculum and a reduction in the number of students on science courses.
- Success rates on the intermediate and advanced-level courses were high in 2009/10 and above national average when compared with similar provision in general further education colleges.
- Students follow scientific procedures carefully and perform experiments competently. They manipulate scientific formulae with confidence and generate accurate results. In laboratories, students pay good attention to health and safety.
- Students make good progress given their prior attainment and a high proportion of those on the advanced course go on to higher education. However, too few students arrive promptly at the start of lessons and/or attend college on a regular basis.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, students demonstrate that they have acquired new knowledge and skills, or have reinforced what they already know or can do, by completing successfully a range of well-designed tasks. In less effective lessons, teachers' questioning is insufficiently targeted or challenging to ensure that all students make sufficient progress. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to use interactive technology to enhance their understanding of scientific concepts.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. Work is usually marked promptly and helpfully, although in some cases the feedback is too brief to be helpful to students.
- The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. Students have the opportunity to progress from an entry level vocational science course, through to the intermediate and advanced courses, and then on to higher education or employment.
- Partnership working is satisfactory. Students benefit from talks from guest speakers and visits to science departments within commercial organisations and higher education institutions. However, students' ability to link theory to practice is limited by the fact that most of them do not undertake relevant work experience.

- Care, guidance and support are good. Students benefit from good pastoral support and they value highly the revised tutorial system. They find it helpful to be able to monitor their attendance, punctuality and academic progress electronically. They work with their tutors to set and monitor realistic targets based on their prior attainment.
- Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment of this subject area is broadly accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although slightly generous in its assessment of teaching and learning. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Science laboratories are of a good standard for practical work and all staff and students work safely.

**What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve attendance and punctuality by implementing rigorously and consistently the college's recently introduced strategies.
- Share good practice in teaching and learning to ensure that all students are challenged to meet their full potential.
- Ensure that both staff and students make more effective use of technology both inside and outside the classroom to enhance learning.

## Business

## Grade 3

### Context

35. Some 160 students are enrolled on business courses, with 17 working at entry level, 9 at foundation and 34 at intermediate. At advanced level, 64 students are in the second year of a BTEC national diploma course. Those in the first year complete a BTEC extended diploma programme, with 29 on the business and finance pathway and 16 on business and law. Of the advanced students, 20 also participate in the UK Careers Academy programme.

### Key findings

- Outcomes are satisfactory. Success rates for students on intermediate and advanced courses were above average in 2009/10 when compared with similar provision in colleges of further education. Many students on advanced courses make very good progress, given their prior attainment. However, the performance of the small number of students on foundation level courses was poor. Students' attendance and punctuality are below the college's target.
- Some students' work, particularly in the case of those selected for the UK Careers Academy programme, is excellent, and students' work in general is at least satisfactory. Advanced-level students on the new business and finance course use book-keeping concepts and accounts language confidently. Intermediate-level students can describe accurately different forms of selling and they demonstrate a sound understanding of consumer protection legislation.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers confidently challenge all students through thoughtfully-prepared activities, related to the students' own interests and experience. They make good use of targeted questioning and a variety of activities to maintain students' interest. Other lessons are less interesting and do not meet the needs, or retain the interest, of all students. In some of the less imaginatively planned lessons, students' poor behaviour impedes learning for the whole group.
- The extent to which the provision meets the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. The college offers business courses at four levels, but the range of provision is narrow. Not all teachers pay sufficient attention to improving and correcting students' spelling and punctuation, despite teaching about the importance of accuracy in business communications.
- Partnership working is good. Students on the UK Careers Academy programme value highly their prestigious work experience opportunities, and the chance they have to put theory into practice and reflect on workplace activities. Other students have a much shorter period of work placement, but all advanced students benefit from some of the trips and visits primarily organised for the UK Career Academy students.

- Care, guidance and support are good. Teachers go out of their way to support students who come to them for help between lessons. The UK Careers Academy students have external mentors, who offer challenge and support which students value highly. The college's systems to support students who have problems with attendance are beginning to have an impact. Managers and staff strive to encourage students to come back to college and offer appropriate support to those who do.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment for this subject area is broadly accurate in identifying key strengths and areas for development. The promotion of equality and diversity, and health and safety, is satisfactory. Managers have made significant progress in improving students' success rates and the quality of teaching and learning. However, not all teachers are taking advantage of opportunities to share good practice and learn from each other. Managers have not yet made sufficient progress in improving attendance and punctuality.

### **What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?**

- Improve attendance and punctuality further to maximise students' chances of gaining their qualifications and to improve their credibility as potential employees.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further through more sharing of good practice in planning lessons and teaching to challenge all students.
- Improve the focus on functional skills by ensuring that all teachers are confident in supporting students to use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written English.

## Information about the inspection

36. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice-principal, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
37. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)****John Ruskin College**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	955	682
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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