

# John Ruskin School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112384
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	397497
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Ruth James HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	197
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Culley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miriam Bailey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 April 2009
<b>School address</b>	Lake Road Coniston LA21 8EW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 441306
<b>Fax number</b>	01539 441123
<b>Email address</b>	admin@johnruskin.cumbria.sch.uk

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Ruth James  
Bernard Robinson

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eighteen lessons were observed and the same number of teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment and progress tracking data, policies and development plans. Questionnaires from students, staff and 70 parents and carers were analysed.

## Information about the school

John Ruskin School is much smaller than the average secondary school. A below average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at School Action is above average, as is the proportion supported at School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs. There are very few minority ethnic students and even fewer students who speak English as an additional language. The school is part of the South Lakes Federation of schools and colleges.

The school did not meet the government's floor standard in 2011, which sets the minimum standards for attainment and progress.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate**  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not good because achievement, teaching, and leadership and management are satisfactory. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has fallen in recent years, but current students' achievement is satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching. The school has a caring ethos, relationships are good and students with personal difficulties are well-supported. A large majority of students, parents and carers is positive about the school. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- In lessons, although examples of good practice were seen, teachers' strategies to promote academic progress are not refined and focused sufficiently, so the pace of learning is not rapid enough. Relationships are very good and teachers are encouraging and supportive. Students' typically positive attitudes in lessons support their achievement.
- Students' behaviour around school is often good, but their behaviour over time is satisfactory because it has shown variations, as is evident in the historic data relating to exclusions. Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Students are friendly and treat adults and each other with respect. Bullying is rare and students say they feel safe.
- Under the clear leadership of the headteacher, leaders and managers at all levels are increasingly focused on developing the quality of teaching and raising achievement. Self-evaluation is not robust enough and actions are not always as timely as necessary. The management of performance is satisfactory and strategies to develop teaching, including individual support plans, are in place. Although there are clear signs of improvement, the impact of changes has not been realised in the proportions of students making expected rates of progress and in gaining five or more A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 by:
  - ensuring that progress is tracked consistently and underachievement identified and followed up.
- Improve teaching so that more lessons are good or better by:
  - developing planning to ensure that work meets the needs of students of all abilities
  - ensuring any weaknesses identified through monitoring of teaching are systematically and effectively followed up
  - improving the consistency of routine marking of students' books.
- Develop leadership and management further by:
  - improving self-evaluation at all levels including the evaluation of the impact of actions taken
  - regularly reviewing and updating policies and other key documents and taking action where necessary.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Although students typically join the school with broadly average attainment, there are differences between cohorts which have contributed to the variations in attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. In 2011, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, fell significantly, but this was the result of a particularly unusual set of circumstances, including staff changes and absences. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations and scrutiny of school assessment and progress tracking data, indicate that achievement is improving and that current students are now making satisfactory progress, reaching average levels of attainment. Disabled students and students with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers because they receive appropriate support. The school has begun to develop strategies to promote literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, but this is in its early stages. Reading skills are developed satisfactorily with additional strategies for those who have difficulties, such as paired reading and reading nurture groups. Students' typically positive attitudes to learning are an important factor contributing to their satisfactory, or sometimes better, achievement in lessons. In lessons students enjoy participating in collaborative work and work well together. Many are keen to answer questions, although sometimes their answers are not specific enough. While students are generally diligent and conscientious in practical tasks, some are slower with written tasks and teachers and teaching assistants do not always follow this up rigorously enough. The large majority of parents and carers believe that students are making good progress.

### Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall and in just over half the lessons observed was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and there are strong relationships. In the better lessons, a good variety of resources is used, with varied teaching strategies. In these lessons, teachers display good questioning skills and make timely prompts and

interventions, enabling students to learn effectively and make good progress. Students engage well with activities and show resilience even when they encounter difficulties. They are self-reliant and work well independently. Teachers have high expectations and make good use of the virtual learning environment, creating a lively atmosphere which motivates students to do their best.

In satisfactory lessons, there are sometimes missed opportunities for students to share ideas and talk about their learning. Planning is often focused on teacher tasks rather than students' learning and progress. Although written plans do include information about disabled students and those with special educational needs, there are few references to explain how their needs will be met, or how work will be matched to the needs of students of different abilities. Work in students' exercise books is often presented poorly with cursory or infrequent marking and little evidence of students following up teacher feedback. Teaching strategies are insufficiently challenging and less successful in promoting good progress. For example, in modern foreign language lessons, there are too few opportunities to develop speaking skills through use of the language.

Formal assessments are carried out regularly and the data are collated centrally and used to identify students who are at risk of falling behind. Students know their target levels and grades and some teachers use the formal assessment data well, providing sound feedback on how to improve. The current focus on raising attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is ensuring that assessment data are effectively used for older students, but practice at Key Stage 3 is not consistent across all subjects. A large majority of parents and carers is satisfied with the quality of teaching.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around school are generally good, though in satisfactory lessons, students often display compliance, rather than demonstrating independent learning skills. Students show respect for other students and for adults. They understand different forms of bullying and report that it is rare. They know what to do and who to turn to should any occur. Students value highly their strong relationships with their teachers and their small school environment. Students know how to keep themselves safe. Although students are taught about e-safety their knowledge and understanding is variable. Attendance, which dropped to below average in 2011, has improved and is now in line with the national average. Although historic data relating to fixed-term exclusions show these to have been above average, the school has taken successful steps to reduce these recently. A small minority of parents and carers and students expressed concerns about behaviour, especially within the context of behaviour in lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body have a clear vision and are ambitious for the school. The reasons for the decline in achievement in 2010 and 2011 have been analysed and explained and concerted strategies are in place to ensure that underachievement is eradicated for current students. All the evidence points to these being successful. The school improvement plan is focused appropriately on raising achievement and improving teaching and leadership and management. Some effective work has been done to deal with historic staffing difficulties and the school now has a stable teaching staff.

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The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Within the context of a small school, care is taken to provide suitable courses and opportunities, using partners, such as the local further education college, when appropriate. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is illustrated by the well-managed support arrangements for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs which enable them to achieve as well as their peers do. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.

The development of teaching is given a high priority and a wide range of strategies is used, for example, to support individual teachers. Changes to data management are beginning to have an impact as more information is shared more widely and used to better effect. Subject leaders are capable and their understanding of data management and progress tracking is improving with training. Tracking data is used to identify underachievement which is then followed up. There is a fairly heavy reliance on interventions but this is partly because of the legacy of underachievement resulting from staffing issues. Improvements in rates of progress and attendance of current students clearly show that the school does have the capacity to improve. Leaders in small subject departments are supported in their development both by senior leaders and through the local partnership arrangements with the South Lakes Federation group of schools. This provides opportunities for sharing good practice and the exchange of ideas. Leaders do monitor the quality of provision through lesson observations, work scrutinies and student discussions. However, self-evaluation tends to be over optimistic, and is still at an early stage of development at subject level. Not all areas for improvement identified are followed up quickly enough. Quality assurance systems are not systematic, some documentation is not up to date and not all actions taken are evaluated for impact.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



25 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of John Ruskin School, Coniston, LA21 8EW**

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. Your questionnaires and comments were important parts of the evidence we collected. We were pleased to hear that you value the good relationships you have with your teachers, and that those of you with particular difficulties feel well-supported. Many of you mentioned how much you appreciated being in a small school. We have found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. Your achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, although there are examples of good practice. We have asked the headteacher and other leaders to work to improve the proportion of good or better lessons by making sure the work is suitable for everyone and your books are marked regularly. Although many of you behave well much of the time, we found that behaviour over time is satisfactory. Attendance is improving. We were pleased to hear that there is very little bullying and you feel safe.

Leaders and managers are working hard to improve your school and we have asked them to make sure that more of you gain five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, by the time that you leave.

You can help by attending regularly and working hard which will help you to achieve the best qualifications you can. Please accept our very best wishes for the future in all that you do.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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