

John Ruskin School

Lake Road, Coniston, Cumbria, LA21 8EW

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a warm, welcoming school where everyone feels valued, safe and secure. There is a wonderful atmosphere for learning. Staff and students are highly motivated to do their best, so everyone thrives.
- Teaching and achievement have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Well planned professional development and opportunities to share best practice are ensuring these improvements continue into the future.
- Teachers make sure lessons are interesting and capture students' imagination. Their enthusiastic approach is motivating, so students are attentive and engaged in their learning.
- Students make good progress across the school and they achieve well at GCSE.
- Students are respectful and supportive of each other. They show consideration and are highly inclusive when socialising and at work.
- Students feel safe and secure because everyone is friendly and all uphold the behaviour policy.
- Students' social and moral skills are promoted exceptionally well in lessons and through the ethos of the school.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and is ably supported by the senior team and middle leaders. The deputy headteacher provides a highly effective role model for teaching.
- Governors are well informed. They provide good support and challenge to leaders and a strong drive for continued improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and students' achievement are not yet outstanding. Assessment and marking are not always used to the best effect to make sure work is at just the right level to enable students of all abilities to make the most rapid progress.
- The work students produce in their books is not of the same high quality in some subjects as it is in others.
- Students' mathematical skills are not as well developed as their literacy skills across other subjects.
- Learning about citizenship and British values is not yet firmly established.
- Leaders' feedback on teaching is not as precise as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in most subjects and all year groups. They looked at students' work in lessons and conducted a detailed scrutiny of a random sample of work across most subjects and all year groups. School leaders observed three lessons with inspectors and joined them in the work scrutiny.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors and teachers. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the South Lakes Federation of schools and a local authority representative by telephone. Both inspectors met with a group of students and spoke with many other students during lessons and at break-times.
- Inspectors considered 22 questionnaires completed by staff, 56 responses to Parent View (the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents) and several letters from parents. They also took account of recent surveys of parents' views carried out by school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including self-evaluation, monitoring information and improvement planning. They analysed data relating to students' achievement, looked at policies and checked safeguarding systems and procedures to promote students' well-being.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- John Ruskin is a much smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well-above average.
- There is a below average proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to this school for students entitled to free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Very few students are from minority ethnic groups and virtually all speak English as their first language.
- The school is part of the South Lakes Federation (SLF) which is made up of 10 secondary schools, Kendal College, a special school and the University of Cumbria. The school receives support from National and Local Leaders of Education through the SLF and the headteacher also supports reviews in other schools as part of her role in the SLF.
- There are no students educated off-site currently. In the past the school has supplemented provision with courses run through the SLF.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has the Geography Mark is a Bronze Eco-School and is a partner school in the Global Learning Programme.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement further by:
 - making sure teachers have the same high expectations of students' productivity and the quality of written work in their books in all subjects
 - using assessment and information from the marking of students' work to plan work that enables students of all different abilities to make the most rapid progress
 - providing opportunities for students to apply mathematical skills across other subjects
 - making sure feedback on teaching and its impact on achievement is as precise as it can be.
- Develop clearer guidelines for teaching about citizenship and British values.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- In this friendly and highly inclusive school, all staff model positive behaviour and have high ambitions for students. All the questionnaires returned from staff reflect their high morale and commitment. Typical comments include: 'relationships at all different levels are strengths' and 'our main aim is the same: that students enjoy school and achieve.' These views are endorsed by the positive ethos and strong sense of community in the school.
- The headteacher provides good strategic leadership, deploying staff carefully to make best use of their skills. The deputy headteacher provides a highly effective role model for teaching and leads improvement in teaching successfully by promoting best practice. Teachers' performance is managed well. All staff have targets for students' achievement and relating to whole-school priorities.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and well informed by leaders' regular checks on teaching and students' work and by external moderation through the SLF. There are good systems to capture data to track students' progress and make sure they are achieving well. Strategic development plans and departmental plans identify the right priorities and are bringing about improvements.
- The new approach to work scrutiny provides a good model for checking students' progress over time. However, feedback following lesson observations tends to focus on what the teacher does and is not sufficiently centred on how well students learn. Consequently, the areas for development are not as precisely defined as they could be in relation to the learning of different groups of students.
- Recent developments to improve middle leadership are proving effective. Leadership of provision for students with special needs is very effective. Subject leaders have a clear view of students' performance in their subject. The departmental self-evaluations make sure that students who are falling behind are identified early and given the support they need to get back on track. There are appropriate plans to provide further support and professional development according to needs.
- The broad curriculum provides students with good opportunities to study a range of academic, creative and practical subjects. Students' experience is enriched with a range of additional activities at lunch-time, after school and through visits. Every opportunity is taken to use the environment as a learning resource; for example, the introduction of a GCSE in environmental and land-based science is popular with students and meets their needs and aspirations well. The close collaboration between schools in the SLF provides further curriculum enrichment, particularly for gifted and talented students.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance to help them choose the GCSE courses that are right for them and to go on to further education or employment that is suited to their ability and interests. In 2014, all students leaving Year 11 went into further education or employment.
- Students' social and moral development is promoted exceptionally well. Students are highly respectful and supportive of each other and they have a well-developed understanding of moral issues. Everyone in the school thrives because of the strong emphasis on fairness, equality of opportunity and inclusivity. Students' spiritual and cultural understanding is promoted well through the curriculum, links with other schools, visits and visiting speakers. They are aware of the diversity in society outside their experience. These attributes prepare them well to be able to contribute positively in wider society.
- Students have a basic understanding of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty through opportunities to discuss such values across the curriculum. However, there is not a cohesive approach to checking that such aspects are taught in depth and in such a way that builds on students' understanding of the values that underpin British society.
- The local authority has provided minimal support to the school as there is well-established partnership working within the SLF. Monitoring and support from National and Local leaders of Education and moderation of work with other schools within the federation is very effective. Leaders and teachers from John Ruskin benefit but also play their part in supporting other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support and challenge school leaders effectively. They know the school well, have a clear understanding of students' performance, are ambitious for students and motivated to ensure the drive for further improvement continues.
 - Governors ensure that all policies are up to date and safeguarding procedures meet all requirements.
 - Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's finances and the salary progression of teachers. The headteacher's performance is managed robustly and governors ensure teachers' pay is awarded according to their performance.
 - They make good use of the pupil premium, provided to the school to support disadvantaged students. The achievement of students supported with additional teaching and mentoring shows improvement

and they are also able to participate in a range of enrichment activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students and staff have excellent relationships, providing a calm and supportive atmosphere for learning. Students are welcoming to visitors and extremely interesting and pleasant to talk to.
- Students look after each other and make sure that those who have special needs are included and encouraged. Students grow in confidence because their contributions are valued.
- Students arrive at lessons well equipped and punctually. They are cooperative and respectful towards their teachers, listen attentively and collaborate with enthusiasm during small group work. They show self-reliance, initiative and creativity when opportunities arise; as seen, for example, during lessons in English, science and expressive arts.
- Occasionally, a few students need to be encouraged to participate fully in discussions and to complete their work to the highest standard they are capable of. However, there was no disruption to learning at all during the inspection and students say this is typical.
- Around school, students are self-disciplined and treat each other with courtesy and respect. They look after the environment and look smart. Students were rehearsing for the school concert and they did this with enthusiasm, self-organisation and a great deal of talent!

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students feel safe because everyone is friendly and teachers are approachable. Those who spoke with inspectors have an in-depth understanding of bullying in its various forms and the damage it can do. They say there is occasional 'falling-out', but bullying is something that is rare in their school. They have every confidence in teachers to sort out any concerns should they arise.
- They show a good understanding of the risks associated with extremism, gangs, knife crime and drug abuse, although these dangers are not part of their experience. They know how to keep safe when using the internet and social media and what to do if they ever feel threatened.
- Students and staff uphold the behaviour and safety policies consistently. There have not been any permanent exclusions for a number of years. Fixed-term exclusions are typically low but they have increased this year due to particular circumstances. Internal exclusion from lessons is rare.
- Attendance is high, reflecting students' enthusiasm for school.
- Parents have very positive views of the school. All parents who responded to Parent View say their child is happy at school, feels safe and is well looked after. Virtually all parents feel that students are well behaved and the school deals effectively with bullying.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and get to know the students extremely well. They usually adapt teaching successfully to meet the varied needs and abilities within each class. Students concentrate well in lessons and are especially productive during small group work.
- Teachers provide good explanations and go on to question and prompt students effectively to make them think deeply and extend their knowledge. In a science lesson, for example, students were challenged to give more detailed and extended answers when discussing electricity. This deepened their understanding.
- Teachers usually assess students' learning thoroughly, in order to plan activities that build on their existing knowledge and skills. In a Year 11 English lesson, for example, students had an excellent understanding of the examination mark scheme so they could improve their own work and help other students to improve theirs. In expressive arts, students critically evaluated and improved their own performance.
- There are occasions in some other subjects; however, when students' day-to-day work in their books is not assessed thoroughly enough to make sure the teaching that follows is at just the right level.
- Marking supports students to make good progress, but there are some missed opportunities to support students in making even more-rapid progress. The detailed marking that is provided on the assessed pieces of work students complete at the end of a topic or unit is extremely helpful. However, students are not always given sufficiently precise or detailed guidance to improve their work as they progress through

the topic. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to add greater challenge and to make sure students complete all their work to the standard they are capable of. Sometimes students' books contain casual errors or unfinished work.

- Students who have special educational needs thrive because they are included and supported effectively in lessons and are provided with very effective extra help, in small group or individual sessions.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and are well-briefed. They question and prompt students expertly, adding to students' knowledge while making sure they think for themselves.
- Literacy is taught very effectively across all subjects. Teachers reinforce literacy learning targets wherever possible. Students develop a love of reading due to the emphasis placed on reading for pleasure as well as for information. The application of mathematical skills is not as well developed across all subjects and is rightly identified as an area for improvement in the subject action plan.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel their child is well taught and makes good progress. Several parents wrote to inspectors citing the 'friendly support' and 'reassuring atmosphere' as important factors in their child's success. Others referred to the way in which teachers adapt teaching to meet the needs of individuals, 'teaching him in the way that helps him learn best' and 'providing the vital building blocks to help her achieve'. Their views are well justified.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress over time because teaching meets their needs well.
- Students' work is accurately assessed each half term and their progress is tracked carefully. The data are used effectively to identify students who are not making at least good progress so that appropriate support or challenge can be put in place.
- In 2014, performance at GCSE improved considerably as a result of the improvements to teaching and better systems to track students' progress. The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs at grade C and above including English and mathematics was above average. Students made at least expected progress from their various starting points in both English and mathematics.
- Students made good progress and attained good grades in most other subjects, particularly in sciences, languages, humanities and arts. Students did not achieve as well as they could have in information technology, design and technology and physical education and leaders have already taken appropriate action to ensure improvements in the future.
- A number of students were entered early for their English GCSE in 2014. Those who did not do as well as expected were able to re-sit their examinations and did well the second time, so all attained the best possible grade. There are no plans to enter students early for GCSE in the future.
- In 2014, all of the most able students made expected progress in English and mathematics and an above-average proportion made better than expected progress. Teachers have high expectations and ensure teaching equips students to achieve the higher grades.
- Disadvantaged students who are supported by the pupil premium were half a grade behind other students in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally in English, in 2014. In mathematics they were one grade behind others in school and non-disadvantaged students nationally. They made just as good progress from their starting points as other students in school. The gap in achievement has narrowed since 2013 and continues to do so.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make very good progress in their academic work, grow in confidence and develop their personal and social skills enormously because their needs are catered for and they are fully involved in the life of the school. As one parent said, 'Teachers spend time adapting course material to suit (our child). They are always there to help and (our child) has grown immensely in skills and confidence.'
- The higher achievement seen in 2014 is being sustained with the current Year 11 cohort and in other year groups. Students across the school are making more good progress in lessons and over time, from their starting points.

What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	112384
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	453719

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Culley
Headteacher	Miriam Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2013
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