

Inspection of John Ruskin School

Lake Road, Coniston, Cumbria LA21 8EW

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this school?

John Ruskin School is a welcoming school where staff know every pupil. There is a strong sense of community spirit. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are warm. Pupils are well cared for, happy and safe. They are polite, respectful and tolerant of one another. Bullying is rare. Pupils said that, if bullying does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Teachers said that they love working at the school. They have high expectations of themselves and of their pupils. In lessons, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they are proud of their work. Pupils said that teachers are approachable and help them to improve. Pupils behave well in lessons and during breaktimes. They enjoy socialising with each other.

Teachers encourage pupils to follow John Ruskin School's vision – 'Be respected, be resilient, be valued, be ready for your future, be you.' Pupils' individuality is celebrated. Pupils are confident and can express themselves well. They question and challenge each other's opinions.

The school takes advantage of its surroundings. Pupils take part in an array of extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, outdoor education and the annual fell-racing competition. These activities build pupils' character and resilience.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations. By the end of Year 11, they do as well as other pupils nationally in a range of subjects. The headteacher and the governors believe in a curriculum that is aspirational for all. Developing pupils' vocabulary is a priority. The curriculum offer is successful in making sure that pupils work hard and enjoy their learning. It prepares them to be responsible young citizens who do not give up when they face challenges.

The curriculum is ambitious. All pupils study the full suite of national curriculum subjects in key stage 3. Leaders have recently introduced extra computing lessons to help prepare pupils for life with modern technology. At key stage 4, pupils are free to choose up to 10 GCSE options. Currently, too few pupils follow the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. Leaders are addressing this earnestly. More pupils are now learning French.

In many subjects, teachers know what content to teach and when to teach it. This is helping pupils to build on their previous knowledge and to know and remember more. For example, in English, religious education, music and science, content is demanding and teachers make sure that they give pupils the chance to recall prior learning. In these subjects, pupils said that teachers explain work clearly and help them to fill gaps in their knowledge. This is not the case in a very small number of

other subjects because the curriculum is not planned well enough.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have access to the full curriculum. Leaders know pupils' needs well and those pupils with SEND are well supported with their learning. Strengths in the curriculum mean that many disadvantaged pupils are achieving well.

Developing pupils' ability to speak and listen is a whole-school priority. It has a place in almost all subjects. Teachers use questions to encourage pupils to think and debate. Leaders are keen to foster pupils' appreciation of music, art and literature. For example, all pupils play a musical instrument, take part in performances and read challenging books.

Leaders do all they can to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils act as school councillors and raise money for charity. They learn about respect and democracy through the developing personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Leaders place a high priority on pupils' mental health and well-being.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance. Almost all pupils go on to further education or apprenticeships.

Pupils benefit from clear routines and high expectations. They behave well, show interest in their learning and have positive relationships with each other. Pupils support each other well in lessons. Parents and carers praised the support that the school gives and said that, when pupils join the school, they settle in well.

Teachers told us that the school is well led and managed. They feel supported in terms of their workload and there are many opportunities for professional development. Governors know the school well. That said, some governors are new, and their understanding of the curriculum is not well developed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and updates. This enables them to identify pupils who may be at risk and secure help if needed. Referrals to a range of other agencies are timely and effective. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online, through assemblies, PSHE education and computing lessons. They know who to go to if they have any concerns. Leaders make sure that pupils are aware of safeguarding risks in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, some governors are new, and their oversight of the curriculum is underdeveloped. Governors should ensure that they gain a better understanding of how well the curriculum is implemented and the impact that it has on pupils' learning.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum in all subjects. In many subjects, pupils know what to learn and in which order, and their work is sufficiently demanding. However, this is not the case in all subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils learn more and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	112384
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10087765
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Cumbria
Chair of governing body	Peter Fox
Executive headteacher	Peter Blackburn
Website	www.jrs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2018

Information about this school

- The school federated with Coniston Church of England Primary School in January 2019. The headteacher is now the executive headteacher of both schools. The two schools share a governing body.
- The number of pupils who join the school in Year 7 is rising. In addition, 36 pupils transferred from other schools during the last academic year.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and a wide range of teaching and support staff.
- We also met with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the South Lakes Federation.
- As part of this inspection, we focused on English, mathematics, science and music. We met with subject leaders for each of these subjects, visited a sample of

lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.

- We met with pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- We reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, attendance and behaviour records, and the procedures in place to keep pupils safe.
- We analysed 42 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 37 free-text responses from parents, 24 responses to the staff questionnaire and 15 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Rachel Cave, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ahmed Marikar

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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