Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: John Ruskin School

Lake Road, Coniston, Cumbria LA21 8EW

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The pupils at John Ruskin School are courteous and kind-hearted and extend the warmest welcome to visitors and new arrivals. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are first-rate ambassadors for their school. They demonstrate the high level of respect that is modelled to them by staff. Pupils are happy.

Pupils rise to the extremely high expectations that the school has for their achievement. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the guidance that they need to succeed. All pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils access an extensive range of opportunities that help them to become confident and independent young people. As school councillors, pupils have a positive influence on the design of the school environment, uniform and rewards trips. The Duke of Edinburgh programme helps pupils to learn new skills and to make a positive contribution to their community.

Activities such as music, sports, arts and crafts, and taking part in school performances help pupils to develop their talents and interests. The school ensures that all pupils benefit from visits that develop their understanding of the subjects that they study. These include overnight stays to take part in adventurous activities and to Europe to learn about different languages and cultures.

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

Governors have a detailed understanding of the performance of the school. Collectively, governors and staff have created an aspirational culture where everyone is valued. The school ensures that pupils know that they are part of a 'high-performance environment'. Pupils make the most of the ambitious curriculum that the school has designed. Staff receive the training that they need to deliver the curriculum with a high level of expertise. They design activities that are well-matched to pupils' needs which helps pupils to build a deep body of knowledge and understanding about the subjects that they study. As a result, pupils are well-prepared for each stage of their education. They move on to meaningful destinations that include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

Staff use their strong subject knowledge to make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. They address any errors or misunderstands that pupils may have about their learning promptly and with a high level of expertise. Staff help pupils to make strong links to their previous learning and ensure that pupils are ready to tackle new learning.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND with accuracy. It provides staff with the detailed information and guidance that they need to help pupils to achieve the best outcomes. Teachers and support staff value the time that they are given to collaborate so that learning is tailored to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This supports their workload.

The school's commitment to developing pupils' communication skills has been central to its success in improving pupils' achievement. It identifies the reading needs of pupils with precision and provides pupils with the support that they need to become confident and eloquent readers. For some pupils, this includes helping them catch up quickly with any gaps that they may have in their phonics knowledge. Pupils use technical vocabulary to talk about their learning with accuracy. They develop a deep understanding of subject-specific concepts, which supports the impressive outcomes that they achieve.

The school ensures that pupils have a strong appetite for learning. Pupils routinely demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons. This is reflected in the positive contribution that they make to each others' learning when they take part in academic discussions. Pupils attend well. The school provides support to a small number of pupils that need help to improve their attendance. This has helped to reduce the number of pupils that are persistently absent from school.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development shows its commitment to developing well-rounded, resilient young people who are ready to make the most of life in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. They know the importance of treating others with respect and they value the differences that may exist between people. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education that prepares them well for adulthood.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in October 2019.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and

pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	112384
Local authority	Westmorland and Furness
Inspection number	10348117
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	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joyce Hallam
Headteacher	Peter Blackburn
Website	www.jrs.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- John Ruskin School is part of the Fells Federation. This is a hard federation with Coniston Church of England Primary School.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, the curriculum, assessment, reading, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered responses to the online surveys for staff and pupils and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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