



The John Ruskin School Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112384
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278919
Inspection dates 29 March 2006 to 30 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Joe Clark

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lake Road
School category	Community		Coniston
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Cumbria, LA21 8EW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01539 441306
Number on roll	170	Fax number	01539 441123
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Colin Davies
Date of previous inspection	1 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Mary Wilson

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 29 March 2006 - 30 March 2006	Inspection number 278919
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

John Ruskin School, much smaller than most secondary schools, is situated in Coniston, in Cumbria, in the Lake District National Park. There are 170 pupils on roll, including a small number who joined the school after Year 7. Attainment on entry is average overall. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also average. There are no minority ethnic pupils or pupils who are not fluent English speakers. Pupils come mainly from the surrounding small towns and villages, with an average mix of social and economic backgrounds. The school is part of the Rural Academy, a group of nine small schools in Cumbria which was awarded Technology College status in 2004, and a member of the South Lakes Federation of Schools. The school's deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher since October 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Although the school judges its effectiveness to be good, inspectors found it to be satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 11 are average overall. However, boys' and girls' levels of attainment on entry differ, and this is reflected in the differing levels of attainment, with girls attaining well above average results and boys well below average results. Given those factors, achievement and progress are satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and make satisfactory progress. Pupils are well cared for, receive good personal support and guidance and feel safe. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance and punctuality are good. Their social and moral development is outstanding. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. Although there are good aspects to teaching, teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. The curriculum supports pupils' learning well. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Self evaluation is still developing, and the school's self evaluation judgements did not match those of the inspection team. Governors work hard and support the school well but do not take enough responsibility for the standards pupils achieve. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school has a large budget deficit which it is disputing with Cumbria County Council. The capacity to improve is satisfactory. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially for boys at the end of Year 11 and particularly in mathematics.
- Share the good practice that exists in teaching to bring the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons up to that of the best.
- Help governors to take more responsibility for the standards pupils achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils join the school with standards that fluctuate from year to year but overall, are broadly average. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 11 standards overall are average. GCSE and other examination results in 2005 were average overall. However, girls achieved well above average results and boys well below average results reflecting their different levels of attainment on entry. Girls achieved their target but boys failed to do so. Targets are correctly pitched; for example, the school's GCSE target for 2007 is 80% A* to C, reflecting the current Year 10's above average attainment on entry. In 2005, pupils did less well in mathematics than in most of their other subjects, including English, where pupils' progress was above average. Boys did particularly poorly and their overall standards at the end of Year 11 are low. Results in design and technology and art and design were good. The 2005 results in national tests taken by pupils in Year 9 were above

average and continued the trend of improvement that began in 2001. Given these pupils' above average attainment on entry, these overall results represent satisfactory achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is reflected in their good attendance, behaviour, and attitudes but has not yet led to higher academic standards. Pupils are conscious of the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. Their social and moral development is outstanding. Pupils relate to each other and to adults maturely and responsibly. Pupils from other schools who enrol after Year 7, particularly disaffected pupils, speak warmly about the positive way the school has helped give them a second chance. All pupils are guided by a clear code of conduct and are clear about what constitutes acceptable behaviour both in and out of school. Residential visits help them develop team work and other social skills. They accept the good range of posts of responsibility on offer, cheerfully and willingly. Pupils are well prepared for the workplace through their enterprise work. Their awareness of others' needs, both in the local community, and world wide, is heightened by charity and fundraising events. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is strong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Where teaching is most effective, teachers know their subject well and plan lessons with activities that capture pupils' interest. Pupils' behaviour is good, relationships are supportive and motivate pupils to want to learn. Boys' progress and achievement have been lower than girls. Assessment is good and pupils know their targets. Marking, although regular, does not always help pupils know what it is they have to do to achieve higher marks or grades. Opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) to help pupils learn are not always taken. Difficulties in staffing in mathematics have led to lower standards. In the less effective lessons, planning to fully engage and stretch each group of learners according to their prior attainment is satisfactory rather than good. Where teachers teach outside their subject specialisms, learning is sometimes inadequate because the methods used to help pupils learn are not challenging enough, and fail to interest or motivate pupils. Marking in these cases is sometimes inadequate because teachers lack subject expertise.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The school provides a curriculum that is well matched to the needs of its pupils. It meets statutory requirements and offers good support for pupils

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In Years 10 and 11, mixed age groups provide flexibility in choice of examination courses. Vocational courses successfully meet the learning needs of some groups of pupils; for example, through links with Kendal College. The personalised approach to option choice in Year 9 is valued and almost all pupils get to take the subjects they want. The ICT curriculum is under review as the current Year 11 examination course has not been a success. All pupils benefit from an outstanding range of popular extra-curricular activities, including residential opportunities and a wide range of art, drama and dance clubs. The school has not been a technology college long enough for its impact on the curriculum to be measured.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Teachers and other adults know pupils' individual circumstances well and are sensitive to their needs. Child protection requirements are clear and all adults in the school have had training in child protection matters. Health and safety issues are secure and understood by staff and pupils. Support for vulnerable pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the school works effectively with a range of outside agencies on their behalf. Teaching assistants offer good support. The systems for monitoring academic and personal development are good. Year 9 and Year 11 pupils know the national curriculum level or GCSE grade they are working at and the target level they are aspiring to. Not all teachers use this information effectively enough in order to help pupils do as well as they could. Pupils receive good advice and guidance when choosing options and making career choices, and learning mentor support is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher and senior leadership team work well together and have maintained staff morale through a period of staffing difficulty which has now been resolved. Whole school self-evaluation procedures and systems are in place and whilst not yet accurate, are being developed further. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed. The need to raise boys' standards at the end of Year 11 through more effective teaching and learning has been identified as a priority in the school's development plan. Parents' and pupils' views and opinions have been sought and acted upon; for example, by bringing back parents' evenings. Links with other schools, particularly primary schools, are good. Technology college status has brought improvements in accommodation and resources. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, but the large budget deficit of approximately £50,000, which the school and Cumbria County Council are in dispute over, is a cause for concern and is depriving the school of much needed resources. Governance is satisfactory. Governors work hard in providing support and encouragement to the school. However, governors have not taken

responsibility for the standards pupils achieve. The school provides sound value for money and the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

The John Ruskin School Technology College

Lake Road

Coniston

Cumbria

LA21 8EW

3 April 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school recently. We really appreciated the help you gave us. This is a summary of what we found.

You feel, and we agree, that the school takes very good care of you. It is very successful in helping you to grow up into friendly, sensible and mature young adults. You enjoy school and your attendance and punctuality are good. The school provides you with an outstanding range of activities outside of lessons.

We were very impressed with your Awards Assembly which celebrated your many laudable achievements whilst at John Ruskin. We saw how much you enjoyed participating in the Brewery School's Dance Platform during our visit.

You have very good attitudes to learning and work hard. You behave well, treating teachers and adults with respect, and each other with consideration.

Despite this, when you leave school, you haven't all achieved the standards in all your subjects that you are capable of. We think you can do better, particularly boys and particularly in mathematics. Your teachers are going to be working hard to stretch you to the limit from now on to ensure that you achieve the best possible examination results at the end of Year 11.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and helpful.

Yours faithfully

Joe Clark

Lead inspector