

# Ruskin Sports and Languages College - A Community High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111417
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310592
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike McLachlan

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 on roll</b>	
School	701
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pam Minshall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Philip Mottershead
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ruskin Road Crewe Cheshire CW2 7JT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 560514
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and draws students from a broad social and economic mix which is overall more disadvantaged than is found nationally. The proportion of students in receipt of free school meals is just above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. However, the number of students whose first language is not English, while below average, is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and this has also increased since 2004. The number of students with a statement of special educational need is average. The school has been a specialist sports college from September 2002. It achieved re-designation as a sports college and was also awarded language college status in 2006. The school was part of an Excellence in Cities cluster of schools. These schools have now formed an Education Improvement Partnership to sustain this collaboration.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. A significant feature is the sense of community shared and celebrated by all who are connected with the school. Overall, achievement is good. Students reach standards that are broadly average by the time they leave school. A well above average proportion of students achieve at least five A\* to G grades at GCSE and virtually all students achieve at least a pass grade in both English and mathematics. This represents good progress given their starting points, as attainment on entry to the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy, is below average. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that all students, particularly the more vulnerable, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from other cultures feel valued, supported and respected. Consequently, these students also make good progress. The school readily welcomes the growing diversity of its intake and the opportunity this gives the students, as the headteacher so eloquently said, 'to have a window on the world.'

Personal development and well-being are good. The vast majority of students become mature and responsible young citizens who show a high level of loyalty to their school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Particularly notable are the strong friendships that exist between students from the many different cultures. Overall, the behaviour of students is good although there is a small minority of students who behave less well. Students generally feel safe and adopt safe practices around school and say they know who to go to for support and help. Attendance is now in line with the national average, a result of the good strategies put in place to improve attendance since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best lessons engage students' interest and enjoyment, through the use of a wide range of activities and opportunities to think independently. This good approach to learning reflects how the school's specialist college status is improving lesson planning and organisation. Overall, the students' understanding of their targets and how to improve their work is good and teachers provide good opportunities for students to assess their own and others' work. However, in a minority of lessons students are not challenged enough to work and think independently, marking is not always helpful and the work planned does not take enough account of different levels of students' attainment in the class.

The curriculum is good and the range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. There is now a good and growing menu of academic and vocational opportunities to meet the needs of all students. There have been some developments in Key Stage 3 but the school is still at a relatively early stage of planning how best to take advantage of new opportunities to amend this curriculum. The school has recently set itself more challenging targets and has a good system for tracking progress towards them. However, the outcomes are yet to be fully tested through public examinations and the school is rightly reviewing and monitoring the impact of these changes on standards and achievement.

Leadership and management are good and have improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is ably supported by his senior managers and the governing body. They have readily seized the opportunities made available to them through their achievement of both specialist sports and language status. This has been a catalyst for change in the structure of leadership and management, a means of driving up standards, improving teaching and learning and providing enhanced resources for the school and its community. Consequently, the school's contribution to and involvement in the wider community

and partnerships with many secondary, primary and special schools is outstanding. The success of this and other initiatives; such the establishment of a family partnership coordinator, together with the good response to issues raised in the previous inspection illustrate the school's good capacity to make further improvement. Financial and safeguarding procedures are in place and the school gives good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure arrangements to monitor standards and achievement in all year groups are robust.
- Provide more opportunities for independent learning.
- Ensure that all teachers provide and assess work that meets the needs of the full ability range.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Overall achievement is good. Students' attainment on entry has fallen in recent years. For example, the current Year 7 started with literacy skills that were well below average compared with below average in the past. In addition, a significant number of all age groups join the school throughout the year with many who are at an early stage of learning English. Consequently, students reach standards that are below average by the end of Year 9. Nevertheless, this represents good progress for these students given their starting points. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average. All students are entered for GCSE English and mathematics, well above the national picture, and all achieve at least the minimum grade in these subjects. However, standards reached at the end of Year 11 in the new measure of five higher (A\* to C) GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, have fallen in the last three years. The school is taking robust action to improve this position and evidence seen during the inspection shows that standards overall and for this measure are improving. This is a direct result of setting more challenging targets and establishing a good whole-school system for tracking students' progress. Outstanding support and guidance for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and particularly for the growing numbers who speak English as an additional language ensure that these students make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students repay the very high levels of care, guidance and support with their obvious enthusiasm for the school and their loyalty to it. They feel secure and trusted. Consequently, they respect their environment and keep it free of litter and graffiti. Students say that they enjoy lessons and value the vast range of additional opportunities available to them, particularly through the school's specialist subjects. In the main, behaviour is good in lessons and around school with students saying that bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. However, in some lessons teachers have to work hard to ensure that a minority of students do not disrupt the learning of others. Most students have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and they enjoy physical activities, with good numbers attending the many extra-curricular activities on offer. Students are very active members of their own community and through sports, charitable and other activities contribute very well, for example, to other primary schools and to the local community. Through work experience and other enterprise initiatives students develop good skills to support their transition to work or future training.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Most lessons are at least good so that students progress well in their learning. Teachers' very secure levels of subject knowledge and course requirements are key factors in ensuring that most students are well prepared for examinations. In the very best lessons, teachers plan different activities that enthuse students and closely match the different levels of attainments in the class. For example, the excellent use of this approach meant that all students in a high-attaining GCSE English group were challenged and motivated to do their best and standards were high. In a 'learning to learn' lesson in Year 7 students used the 'empathy glasses' they had made to great effect to see, understand and explain other students' points of view. However, in a minority of lessons the range of activities is too narrow, teachers talk for too long, the students are too passive. Teachers and teaching assistants, other support staff and outside agencies work well to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and particularly those students who are at an early stage of learning English. They make good progress as a result.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Students' enjoyment of school and the very high proportion who continue in education or training confirm the appropriateness of the school's curriculum. The developing programme in Key Stage 4 includes a good range of sports-related qualifications as befits a specialist sports college. It makes effective use of close partnerships with other schools and colleges to develop a more vocational approach to better serve the needs of all students. Also worthy of note is the above average proportion of students now taking accredited modern language courses in Years 10 and 11, reflecting the impact of the school's second specialism. Despite its small size, the school provides a very extensive and well subscribed range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport. The enrichment programme lessons in Key Stage 4 and the 'learning to learn' lessons in Year 7, for example, provide further opportunities for students to develop interests that support a healthy life. They also help students develop empathy for others and successfully supplement a well planned programme for personal, social, careers and health education.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school modestly assesses the quality of care, guidance and support as good. Inspectors judge these aspects to be outstanding. The excellent house system lies at the heart of a pastoral provision geared to meet and support the needs of the individual. House staff continue with their tutor groups throughout the school. As a result, 'They know us very well,' and 'There's always someone to ask if you've got problems,' are typical student comments. Racial harmony prevails throughout the school community. Very good support for those who are disaffected ensures that they gain worthwhile qualifications. Attendance at the support centre enables those who exhibit the most challenging behaviour to achieve well. The highly effective arrangements for the induction of new students, at whatever point they join the school, enable them to settle in quickly. Subsequent guidance for option choices in Year 9 and when leaving school are very good. Consequently, virtually no student leaves without a formal qualification

and almost all students move on to further education training or employment. Students know their targets and how to reach them. Tracking systems are used effectively by senior management and subject leaders to identify underachievement. Form tutors are fully involved in supporting these students through contact time set aside for them to meet individual students to review their progress across all subjects. The 'support weeks' provide excellent opportunities for students to reflect on and improve their own and others' behaviour. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are in place, meet national guidelines and are reviewed regularly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher is a strong leader with a clear vision for the future development of the school. He is well supported by the core and extended leadership teams. The governors are proud of their school's tradition in this community; the school has its centenary year in 2009. They are well informed and consequently are able to support its work and challenge its leaders. Self-review, at all levels, is accurate and the views of its students and the community are sought and acted on so that improvement planning is well focused. More challenging targets and developments in the curriculum have recently been introduced and these are beginning to improve standards and achievement. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and supporting all of its students so they achieve well is outstanding. The vision for and the considerable achievement of 'joint' specialist college status is a driving force behind the school's improvement. As a result, the recently upgraded community facilities are used very well to provide a wide range of sporting sessions, neighbourhood activities, health promoting courses and additional support to a large number of other schools.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Ruskin Sports and Languages College - A Community High School, Crewe, CW2 7JT

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school during the recent inspection. You were a credit to yourselves and to your parents or guardians. We think you go to a good school. We could see that you enjoy all that it has to offer and how you repay the very high levels of care, guidance and support the school gives you with your obvious enthusiasm for your school and your loyalty to it. You tell us you feel secure and trusted. We are very impressed by the way you care for your school keeping it free of litter and graffiti. We think you become responsible citizens and are impressed by the obvious friendships between students from many different cultures. We think you behave well, although it is disappointing to see some of you who do not always concentrate or contribute in your lessons.

You tell us you enjoy the wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities provided through the sport and language college status that your headteacher and his staff have worked so hard to gain for you. We agree that your curriculum is good. We think your school is taking the right steps to improve what is on offer and in setting you more challenging targets and tracking your progress. We think it will be helpful if staff continue to review these developments and monitor your progress to ensure that you all reach your targets when you take your examinations.

We think you are well taught and you learn well. You say you enjoy learning when lessons are interesting and you are encouraged to be active and independent and we saw many lessons that are like that. We think it will be helpful if the school provides more opportunities for you to take charge of your own learning and that the work set better matches and challenges different ability groups within some classes.

We think your headteacher and his staff are good leaders and managers who know what the school does well and how to improve it. We are particularly impressed by the way they have achieved specialist status in sports and languages and how this is used, not only to improve your school, but also to work with many other schools and the local community. With your continued support and hard work, your good school can become even better.