

# John Ruskin School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112384
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	325593
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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 (total)	208
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kay Shepherd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jonathan Longstaffe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Lake Road Coniston Cumbria LA21 8EW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 441306
<b>Fax number</b>	01539 441123

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## 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. Students come mainly from the surrounding villages, although an increasing number come from urban areas further afield. Students come from an average mix of social and economic backgrounds. A below average proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are very few minority ethnic students and even fewer students who have English as an additional language. The school is part of the Rural Academy, a group of seven small schools in Cumbria which was awarded Technology College status in 2004, and a member of the South Lakes Federation of Schools. An above average proportion of students join and leave the school other than at the usual time.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

John Ruskin is a good school where students achieve well. It capitalises on its small size by providing a very welcoming and friendly ethos where relationships are very good and students and staff know each other well. It provides very good personal care for all students and especially for the above average numbers of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are particularly appreciative of the support and the quality of education their children receive. Their comments included, 'her progress has been amazing', 'our views and concerns are always taken seriously' and 'an excellent school that is a tremendous benefit to the whole area'.

The school is well led and managed. Senior leaders and governors have a clear view of its strengths and weakness and clear priorities for further improvement. They have forged very good links with a wide range of partner schools and organisations particularly through the South Lakes Federation, the Rural Academy and in its role as a specialist technology college. These links enhance the curriculum very well by broadening the choice of courses on offer, allow teaching and subject expertise to be shared and ensure students transfer smoothly from one stage of their education to the next.

Standards are above average and students make good progress as they move through the school. They enter Year 7 with broadly average standards and achieve well in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to reach above average standards at the end of Year 11. In 2008 Year 9 and Year 11 students reached above average standards in tests and GCSE examinations. Standards were highest in English but results dipped in science. The school is aware that a lack of continuity in the teaching of science has led to underachievement and has now taken successful action to remedy this weakness.

Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. In some lessons teaching is outstanding. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and work is well matched to the needs of students. Teachers use varied activities to engage students' interest so they enjoy learning. However, there are still too many satisfactory lessons in which the pace of learning is slower. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve all lessons to the standards of the best and are evaluating lessons and providing support and training to achieve this aim. Systems are now in place to track students' progress but these are in the early stages of development and are not yet used consistently across the school.

Students' personal development is good. Most enjoy school and their attendance is outstanding. Students are well motivated, keen to succeed and behave well. Students know how to stay healthy and safe. They are keen to contribute to the community, take on responsibility and have good basic skills. Consequently they are well prepared for the world of work.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that fewer lessons are satisfactory and more are good.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and achievement is good. In this much smaller than average school standards do fluctuate from year to year because cohorts of students are very small. In most year groups more students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is average. Students enter the school with broadly average standards and make good progress to reach above average standards when they leave. In tests at the end of Year 9 students have reached above average standards for the last three years. In 2008 students achieved best in English and least well in science where results dipped to below average and school targets were not met. GCSE results were above average in 2008 and students achieved well. School targets for the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades A\* to C were exceeded. However, specialist school targets although met in technology were not met in mathematics and science. Students achieved best in art, expressive arts, English literature, geography and vocational courses but less well in science. All groups of students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved well.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students say they feel safe, bullying is rare and when it does occur is dealt with well. Students appreciate the peer buddy system and the open access to the school nurse at student drop in sessions. John Ruskin students are healthy and enjoy high levels of participation in extra curricular activities such as sport and dance. The Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards recognise their achievements and further ensure healthy development. Behaviour around the school is good as a result of a rewards and consequences system which students helped design, understand and to which they respond well. This inclusive school has a low exclusion rate and attendance of all groups is outstanding given the difficulties around travel and seasonal employment. This is further evidence of how much students and their parents value the education on offer. John Ruskin students make a good contribution to their school and the local community. They willingly take on responsibilities as prefects, help younger students with reading and take part in local events such as Coniston in Bloom. The school prepares its students well for their future lives and as a result almost every student goes on to further education, employment or training.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding. It is very occasionally inadequate. In the best lessons, teachers plan a range of stimulating activities with a real emphasis on independent and group learning. In such lessons, all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the work is pitched at a level suitable for their needs. An example of outstanding teaching promoted real challenge and understanding and involved the use of technology, peer review, group discussion and planning, presentations to the group and teacher input. Less effective lessons lack pace and challenge where tasks are repetitive and over reliant on teachers talking at length. An effective programme to develop

the skills of teachers is having a positive impact on improving the frequency of good teaching but a significant proportion of satisfactory lessons remain. Much work is marked thoroughly with helpful comments and clear grades which give students a sense of achievement and progression and an understanding of how they can improve. This good practice is not yet applied consistently across all departments

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It has three main strengths. Firstly, close links with partner schools and colleges enable this small school to offer a good range of both academic and vocational courses at varying levels, which meet students' needs well. Secondly, the curriculum is particularly responsive to specific local needs with an emphasis on tourism, catering and even a course in mountain bike maintenance. Thirdly, the school's well established specialist technology college status has enhanced the curriculum and encouraged links between subjects which make work more meaningful and relevant for students in, for example, mathematics and food technology. There is good provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and the good personal, social, health and education curriculum contributes well to students' personal development. Students enjoy the many opportunities they have to take part in extra-curricular activities, particularly in dance and sport.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care guidance and support are good. All safeguarding procedures are in place and understood by staff. There is outstanding care and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is enhanced by links with external agencies. Pupils benefit from good personal development lessons with trained school staff leading and effective contributions from partners within the community. The strong links with feeder schools and the good support given when students move into the school are valued by the students and their parents. Good links with post-16 providers help to ensure smooth progress beyond school. Students feel safe and know where to go should a problem arise. Student planners are used as an effective means of communication between school and home. Students understand their targets and most know how to improve their work although marking and guidance is not always consistently helpful.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders provide a clear direction for the school's work. They have addressed issues from the previous inspection successfully and the school is well placed for further improvement. The actions of the assistant headteachers in monitoring teaching and learning and in managing the provision of good personal care and guidance for students are leading to good achievement and personal development across the school. This is a very inclusive school where all are valued and equality of opportunity is promoted well. Self-evaluation is good. Leaders, managers and governors know the school well. Leaders are aware that there is underachievement in science and have recently taken successful action to address this issue so standards are now showing the first signs of improvement. Senior leaders make good use of challenging targets to raise achievement. However, systems for using

assessment data to track students' progress accurately are in the early stages of development and are not yet used consistently across the school.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Sporting events, dance and arts projects, links with other countries, work with charities, links with partner schools and organisations and the taught curriculum are all ensuring students have a good understanding of the needs of global, national and local communities whose faiths and cultures differ from their own. Governance is good. Since the last inspection governors have become increasingly involved in strategic planning and in challenging and evaluating the schools work. The school provides good value for money.

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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?	2
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	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

29 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of John Ruskin School, Cumbria, LA21 8EW

Thank you for making me and the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school this week. A particular thank you to those of you who took time to tell us about your school, about the lessons and activities you enjoy and about the progress you are making. Please also thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and letting us know what they think about your school.

These are the main findings included in our report.

- John Ruskin is a good school.
- You reach above average standards and achieve well.
- Your school is well led and managed.
- Your attendance is outstanding and you behave well.
- Lessons are good and the curriculum you follow is good.
- Your school gives you good care, guidance and support and your personal development is good.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that fewer lessons are satisfactory and more are good.

You can help your school to improve even further by attending regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can. Best wishes for the future.

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector