

John Ruskin College

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 130434

Name of lead inspector: Nigel Fletcher HMI

Last day of inspection: 12 March 2010

Type of provider: Sixth form college

Address: Selsdon Park Road
South Croydon
CR2 8JJ

Telephone number: 020 86511131

Information about the provider

1. John Ruskin College is a small sixth form college in South Croydon and is one of three colleges in the borough. In 2008 it was under threat of possible closure. Croydon is the most populated borough in London with approximately 400,000 residents. In 2008/09 unemployment was 8.2%, compared with the national rate of 6.9%. The borough includes several areas of economic deprivation.
2. In 2008/09 the college had approximately 950 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 740 adult learners who studied part time. All were funded by London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC). School pupils aged 14 to 16 study health and social care, and retail. The college has recently begun courses for young refugees and asylum seekers, and for pupils disaffected with school. Courses are offered in 10 of the 15 subject sector categories. The college also has a small number of subcontracted Train to Gain programmes which are not covered in this inspection. Nearly one third of full-time students aged 16 to 18 study at levels 1 and 2, and around 85% are studying vocational programmes at levels 1, 2 or 3. In 2009/10 the college stopped offering AS- and A-level courses.
3. Around 90% of students are from minority ethnic groups compared with the local average of around 58%. Students come from a wide geographical area across south London. Their prior attainment is often much lower than that seen in other sixth form colleges. Educational attainment in the local authority is just above the national average with 52% of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades including mathematics and English at GCSE. The college's mission is to 'provide the highest quality education and training opportunities for young people and adults to increase their employability and progression prospects, thus enhancing their life experiences'.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider/college:
 - Premier Training (sport)
 - Twinkleberry (child development)
 - Welcome Skills (hospitality and catering)
 - WSG Associates (security services)
 - Cahro (health and social care)
 - Futureworks (child development).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	82 part-time learners
Further education (16 to 18)	93 full-time learners 5 part-time learners
Foundation learning (16 to 18)	213 full-time learners 1 part-time learner
Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+)	78 full-time learners 463 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain	497 learners

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Health and social care	3
Science and mathematics	4
Sport, leisure and recreation	3
Business, administration and law	4

Overall effectiveness

5. The college's overall effectiveness is inadequate. After a period of decline when the future of the college was uncertain, the new principal and governors have set ambitious targets for improvement. The college has taken significant steps in addressing issues identified by a thorough self-assessment, but there has been insufficient time for these actions to be reflected fully in students' outcomes which remain inadequate. Nevertheless, improvements can already be seen and the college demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The overall quality of lessons has improved, although a significant minority of lessons do not meet the needs of all students. The college's lesson observation scheme is more accurate but focuses too little on the outcome of learning. Actions to improve the quality of teaching have had more effect in some curriculum areas than others. The college makes a satisfactory response to the needs and interests of students, but its response to the needs of employers has been slow. Educational and

social inclusion are good and links with schools and community groups are strong. Guidance and support are satisfactory. There is a good range of personal and welfare support. Tutor support is good, but group tutorials are ineffective. Initial assessment and guidance are not used sufficiently well to ensure that students are always on the appropriate course.

7. The college is undergoing a restructuring. Although the quality of management is improving, it remains weak in too many areas. However, quality assurance has improved and the self-assessment report accurately identifies the college's strengths and areas for improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory, and students now feel particularly safe at college. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Resources for learning are generally satisfactory and accommodation has been well maintained.

Main findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Despite recent improvements, the overall success rates remain significantly below national averages. Retention rates have improved, but remain low. Recent procedures to improve attendance and punctuality have yet to impact, and student absenteeism and lateness to lessons are still too high.
- School pupils aged 14 to 16 make satisfactory progress on their courses. Success rates for Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory. Although a high proportion of learners complete their programmes successfully, not all complete their courses in the agreed timescale.
- Students' progress overall is unsatisfactory. Students on vocational diploma courses generally achieve grades at levels above those predicted from their prior attainment. However, most students on GCSE and A-level courses do not attain the grades expected of them.
- Students feel safe and enjoy their lessons. Across the college, students make satisfactory progress in developing their social and economic well-being.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Actions resulting from the lesson observation scheme are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning, although they do not yet focus sufficiently on students' progress. The proportion of lessons judged as good or better has increased, although there are still variations in the quality of teaching and learning across the college.
- Teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) well in many lessons and students enjoy using the virtual learning environment (VLE) to enhance their learning.
- Assessment of students' work is generally satisfactory. However, there is too much variation in the quality and timeliness of feedback on written work.
- Provision to meet the needs and interests of students is satisfactory. However, there are gaps in the curriculum especially at level 1. The college has well-developed plans to expand the vocational provision for the future, particularly at levels 1 and 2.

- The college is increasingly engaged in a number of partnerships within the local area. It is fully involved in the planning and development for students aged 14 to 19. Links with employers are at an early stage of development, and there is insufficient employer input to curriculum developments in the college.
- Guidance and support are satisfactory. Support for students' welfare and their additional learning needs is good. However, initial advice and guidance are not effective in ensuring that all students are on the most appropriate course and level. Too many students do not have sufficient literacy and numeracy skills for the level of course they are enrolled on.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. In recent years, the college has failed to meet key targets for enrolments and success rates. As a result, the college's financial position deteriorated. A new strategic plan is in place to address these issues and the college is restructuring its curriculum, staffing and management.
- The college has not had sufficiently robust systems to ensure the quality of its provision and improve outcomes for students. This is beginning to improve. Self-assessment is now accurate and actions in place are starting to bring about improvements, but there are still too many unsatisfactory areas of the provision.
- Students' views are sought and acted upon. Students feel valued and respected. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory as is the promotion of equality and diversity.

What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff at all levels work relentlessly to improve students' attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all lessons focus strongly on maximising students' learning and progress to improve success rates.
- Improve the quality of assessment feedback to ensure that students are clear about their progress and what they need to do to improve.
- Further develop links with employers to improve the vocational curriculum and the work-related skills of students.
- Improve initial assessment, advice and guidance to ensure that students are on the most appropriate course for their needs and abilities.
- Monitor and review frequently the effectiveness of changes being implemented in management, staffing and the curriculum to ensure that quality improvement and financial targets in the strategic plan are met.
- Ensure that quality assurance and curriculum management are effective in all areas to drive up expectations for staff and students and to ensure action plans bring about more consistent improvements.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What students like:

- feeling safe and the friendly atmosphere in the college
- using the VLE to catch up or prepare for lessons
- being treated fairly and equally in a mature environment
- the teaching that has generally improved in the last year
- the staff who are supportive especially in their own time
- the way the college listens to students and resolves any issues they identify
- progress review weeks.

What students would like to see improved:

- the high level of staff turnover
- the range and balance of activities in some lessons
- the timetabling of lessons
- a greater emphasis by teachers on students meeting deadlines for submission of work
- the prompt return of, and detailed feedback on, work in some subjects.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. The college is recovering from a period of decline in performance through the uncertainty about its future since the last inspection. Since September 2009 the leadership team has evaluated accurately the college's areas of weakness, developed a clear vision supported by staff, and prepared a robust plan to begin improving the quality of provision. Management information on students' progress is more accurate and timely. Self-assessment is increasingly evaluative, self-critical and accurate. Students' views are sought frequently and acted upon where practicable. Students speak positively about improvements in teaching and other aspects of their life at college.
9. The college's longer-term actions prepare the college well for future sustainability of improvements, for example through a management restructuring and expanding the more successful vocational provision. Governance is satisfactory, and the governing body has set challenging targets for the college. Improvements are already evident, for example in students' outcomes, although these are still low. Some aspects of provision are not yet satisfactory. Nevertheless, progress has been made in establishing a secure path for improvements that is starting to benefit students.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

10. Outcomes for students are inadequate, as identified in the college's self-assessment report. Success rates declined during the college's uncertainty over its future. However, over the last year, plans to raise performance are beginning to show an improvement, although success rates still remain low. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 on long courses at level 1 remain below average, although those at level 2 improved significantly to the national average. Success rates at level 3 declined and remain well below average, mainly for AS- and A-level courses. Students on most vocational programmes achieve better than expectations, based on their prior attainment. Success rates for adult learners on long courses improved significantly and are now satisfactory.
11. There is no significant difference in the progress made by students from different minority ethnic groups. However, the success of male students is lower than that of female students, particularly at level 2. The college is aware of this and are taking appropriate action. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make better progress than those without identified difficulties.
12. Retention improved in 2008/09, although remained below average for students aged 16 to 18. College managers have developed procedures to improve attendance and retention. Although retention is showing further improvement in the current year, attendance and punctuality rates have not yet increased, and are still too low.

13. Learners on Train to Gain programmes achieve satisfactory outcomes. While the overall success rates for learners are good, rates completed within the agreed timescale are at the national average. School pupils aged 14 to 16 make satisfactory progress and develop knowledge and skills appropriate to the world of work. About a third progress to courses at the college.
14. Most students enjoy their studies, gain in confidence and improve their employability skills. Standards of their work have improved in the last year and are now satisfactory. Students speak highly of the recent improvements to the security arrangements in the college, and they feel safe around the college and in their work.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

15. The proportion of lessons that are judged as good or better by the college has increased, but the college acknowledges that too many lessons are still only satisfactory. Inspectors found too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning. In a media lesson the teacher asked probing questions to ensure students had understood fully the key learning points. As a result, students made good progress and produced work of a high standard. However, too few lessons include effective stretch and challenge or strategies to maximise learning and progress for all students.
16. Many teachers use information and learning technology well, but this is not consistent across the college. Students frequently use the VLE to enhance their learning and many access it remotely from home. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory, but work is not always returned sufficiently quickly, or with helpful comments on how to improve.
17. Most students receive an initial assessment of their levels of literacy and numeracy. Although the results are used well in some areas, such as in health and social care, they are not used sufficiently well in most areas to enable students to maximise their learning and progress in all lessons. The 'electronic-tracker' is used well to enable students to monitor their own progress, for example in sport.
18. Actions from the college's lesson observation scheme are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the detailed feedback to teachers gives insufficient emphasis on students' learning and progress. Teachers value the good range of staff development opportunities, such as the Bitesize initiative and the support of teaching mentors.
19. The college is phasing out all A-level provision, and will offer only vocational courses from September 2010. This decision is based on a clear rationale, informed through consultation with local schools, the local authority and the LSC. Currently there are gaps in provision at level 1, of which the college is aware and has well-developed plans in place to rectify from September 2010. Progression to higher-level courses within the college and to higher education are good. The college is actively involved in the strategy for determining the

nature and range of provision for local young people. It has strong links with the community, for example providing programmes for young refugees and asylum seekers and for disaffected school pupils. However, partnerships with employers are underdeveloped.

20. Arrangements for welfare support for students are good. Students increase their awareness of issues such as substance misuse and sexual health through college theme weeks, and make good use of various external referral agencies if necessary. Support for students with additional learning needs is good, and its impact on student progress is monitored closely. Students appreciate the support they receive in one-to-one tutorials, but gain little benefit from group tutorials. Initial advice and guidance are inconsistent and too many students are placed on a course, or at a level, that is inappropriate to their needs or abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

21. The college is undergoing significant change following a period of uncertainty about its future. In recent years it has failed to meet key targets for recruitment and success rates. There has been a deterioration in the quality of provision and outcomes for students are unsatisfactory. A new strategic plan is in place, which aims to reposition the college in terms of the courses it offers to meet local needs. Currently, the college recruits the majority of its students from outside the local area and enrolments have been declining. The new plan focuses on national and local priorities and has been drawn up following market research and partnership work in the local area. Following the appointment of a new principal in September 2009, and in order to deliver the new strategic plan, the college is restructuring its management team and staffing profile. It is too early to judge the impact of the changes.
22. The governing body provides a satisfactory level of direction for the college. Governors took a clear lead on the need to reposition the college curriculum. Recent changes to membership have improved the breadth of skills on the board and strengthened its capacity to monitor the work of the college. There is now a better level of challenge, focusing on the issues facing the college and actions to improve outcomes for students.
23. The college has not been sufficiently rigorous in the level of challenge for students to succeed, nor in its quality assurance systems. The leadership team is attempting to bring about a cultural change within the organisation. Self-assessment has improved. Reports provide an honest and self-critical account of areas for improvement. Data used to inform self-assessment have improved and now provide more reliable information for senior managers and course teams to evaluate provision. Inspection findings match the college's self-assessment report. Inspectors found that actions taken this year have improved the quality of teaching and learning and the standard of students' work, but not yet attendance or punctuality. At curriculum level there are still inconsistencies in the effectiveness of management actions to drive improvements, and inadequacies remain in a number of areas. The management of programmes for school pupils aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory.

24. The college does not provide satisfactory value for money as too few students achieve their intended outcomes. In addition, the financial situation of the college has deteriorated in recent years due to failure to meet enrolment targets. There is some evidence of cost savings in the current year, but it is too early to judge the impact of planned efficiency measures. College buildings are well maintained and resources to support teaching and learning are generally satisfactory.
25. Arrangements for safeguarding students are satisfactory. Health and safety checks, and appropriate risk assessments, are carried out regularly. There is a good level of onsite security. Promotion of health and safety awareness within the curriculum is satisfactory. Students have a good understanding of anti-bullying and harassment procedures. Staff have received training to update them on safeguarding procedures. The college has links with appropriate external agencies to enable it to carry out its safeguarding responsibilities. It carries out checks on staff in line with legal requirements.
26. The college meets its statutory requirements with regard to equalities legislation. The impact of policies and procedures is monitored by the equalities committee which has begun to take a more active role in promoting equality and diversity across the college. Cross-college events effectively raise students' awareness, but the college is at an early stage in training staff on how equality and diversity can be embedded within teaching and learning. The college regularly monitors whether any groups are performing less well than others. This shows some differences between groups in particular years but no overall trends. In 2008/09 success rates for male were lower than females, especially on courses at intermediate level. Action taken to address this has led to some improvement in retention rates for these students in the current year. However, systems to analyse the performance of different groups of students at course level, against which targets can be set, are not yet in place.
27. Systems to receive feedback from students have improved this year. Students' views are encouraged and valued by the governing body and the principal. Students speak enthusiastically about their roles on the student council and on college committees. They receive feedback on progress from their input and give examples of changes they have influenced. The college is at an early stage of developing its strategy for employer engagement.

Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 3

Context

28. There are 192 full-time students on health and social care, and childcare courses at levels 1 to 3. There are also 25 young apprentices aged 14 to 16. Around 90% of full-time students are aged 16 to 18. In addition, around 90 learners are on Train to Gain programmes, which are not within the scope of this inspection.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates for health and social care courses in 2008/09 are now above national averages, whereas those for childcare courses are still low. Achievements for young apprentices at level 2 are high.
- The standard of students' work is generally good. This includes written assignments and both oral and written work completed during lessons. However, despite implementing new procedures to reduce students' absenteeism, attendance and punctuality are still low.
- Students enjoy their learning and in some cases make good progress. They develop good learning and employability skills, such as undertaking research, taking part in discussions, and presenting work to their peers. Students feel particularly safe within the college environment.
- The quality of teaching and learning is now good. Most lessons are well planned to respond to the individual needs of students, and include effective informal assessment to promote learning. Students are motivated and demonstrate confidence in their work. Safeguarding matters are reinforced well through the curriculum.
- The range of courses to meet the needs and interests of students and employers is satisfactory. However, enrichment activities, such as visits or guest speakers are insufficient. Students also have few opportunities to gain additional qualifications, for example in food hygiene and manual handling, in order to improve their employability.
- Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. External agencies are used well to provide effective welfare support. One-to-one tutorials are effective and tutors maintain regular contact with parents and carers to report on students' progress. The improved tutorial and pastoral support are contributing to improvements in retention.
- Initial advice and guidance, and assessment of numeracy and literacy skills, are ineffective in ensuring that all students are placed on the most appropriate course. Too many students have been placed on courses where the level is too high for their needs and abilities.

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Course review and self-assessment are satisfactory. The team has identified the key areas of improvement needed, and have strategies in place to address these. However, these have not yet been fully implemented and the full effectiveness of actions cannot yet be seen. The use of accurate management information to review performance at curriculum level is in its early stages.
- Arrangements to ensure equality and diversity are satisfactory. Students have a good understanding of the issues and know what their responsibilities are as individuals and in their various vocational roles. However, the proportion of male students is low and this has yet to be addressed.
- The resources are generally satisfactory. Students value the learning resource centre and the library, and the virtual learning environment which enables them to access their work from home. However, some classrooms are too crowded which restricts students from working together on group tasks.

What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff at all levels work consistently to improve students' attendance and punctuality.
- Increase the additional courses available to students in order to improve their employability.
- Improve initial advice and guidance to ensure that students are placed on the appropriate level of course to enable them to make better progress.
- Ensure that accommodation is appropriate for the size of the class.
- Develop appropriate strategies to increase the recruitment of male students.

Science and mathematics

Grade 4

Context

29. Currently 203 students are studying science and mathematics courses; over 90% are aged 16 to 18. Courses include GCSE mathematics, diplomas at levels 1 and 2 in applied science, AS-level psychology and A levels in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology and psychology. Around 65 students are studying A-level courses, which will no longer be offered from September 2010.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. Overall success rates declined in 2008/09, with a significant reduction in achievement for AS- and A-level courses. Achievement of high grades on these courses was particularly low. However, all students on the diploma courses at levels 1 and 2 achieved their qualifications and progression to higher education from the national diploma is good. Students' attendance and punctuality are too low.
- Students' progress compared to their prior attainment is poor and declining in A-level biology and chemistry, and in AS-level biology, chemistry, physics and psychology. It is good for the first and national diplomas in applied science. Most students enjoy their course and time at the college.
- Students feel safe and appreciate the quality and amount of security within the college. Many within the area are active in the students' union and participate in community and charitable work.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons students are kept fully engaged by a range of activities which motivates them. Information technology is used effectively and learning is carefully monitored through individual questioning. In weaker lessons, classroom management is less effective and there is a lack of planning to meet the individual needs of students.
- Opportunities for additional academic support provided by teachers are good and much appreciated by the students. Workshops outside of normal lessons are available, as is individual support when required. However, they have had little impact on improving students' attainment. Feedback on assessed work is largely constructive and helpful in enabling students understand what they need to do to improve.
- The needs of students are poorly met. There is a lack of progression pathways due to limited provision. There are no programmes currently at level 1. A few visits to places of relevance to the courses are arranged, and work-experience is only offered to national diploma students in year one.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. The lack of rigour in the selection process leads to students enrolling on courses at an inappropriate level for their abilities. The provision of formal learning support failed to result in the retention of many of those in receipt of it.

- The monitoring of students' progress is good. An effective progress monitoring system is linked to electronic individual learning plans. Students have regular individual tutorials at which realistic and measurable targets are set. These are monitored closely. However, not all students value the group tutorials.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. While there is greater use of data to monitor progress, and actions are in place to address underperformance, these have so far had little impact. Success rates continue to decline and there is no improvement in attendance within the current year.
- The lesson observation process has helped to raise the quality of teaching and learning in the current year. Staff are observed twice a year and action plans are drawn up to address the areas for development identified.

What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance and punctuality to ensure that students maximise their opportunity to gain their qualifications.
- Ensure that planning of lessons takes into account the individual needs of students to enable all students to attain their full potential.
- Develop provision at level 1, and enhance the vocational pathways at levels 2 and 3, to provide opportunities for students with a lower level of skills in English and mathematics.
- Introduce initial assessment and rigorous entry criteria to ensure that students are enrolled on programmes at the appropriate level.

Sport, Leisure and Recreation

Grade 3

Context

30. The college offers diplomas in sport at levels 2 and 3, a certificate in coaching football at level 1, and certificates in gym and fitness instructing at levels 2 and 3. There are 95 full-time students aged 16 to 18, of whom approximately 87% are male, and 61 part-time adult learners. There are 21 studying at level 2 and 74 studying at level 3. There are 42 students training at the football academy and competing in three teams at national and local levels.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are satisfactory. Success rates are low on the first diploma and BTEC award in sport, and also on the level 1 certificate in coaching football. However, they are high on the national diploma in sport and on part-time certificate programmes for adults. The proportions of students achieving high grades on the diploma programmes in sport at levels 2 and 3 are below average.
- In 2008/09 retention rates on all full-time courses were lower than national averages. However, in the current year, retention is improving. Punctuality to lessons has also improved, as has attendance which is now good.
- Students make good progress in lessons, particularly those on the national diploma in sport, and adults on part-time fitness instructing qualifications at both levels 2 and 3. Students make good use of the 'electronic-tracker' to record and monitor their progress.
- Students enjoy their work, and written assignments are of an appropriate standard. They feel safe and supported in a caring environment. Students make a good contribution to the community. For example, an innovative volunteering and work-experience programme supports sports coaching in local schools and provides students with valuable experience.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In most practical lessons students demonstrate good coaching and instructing skills, and satisfactory sports skills. However, in too many theory lessons there is insufficient challenge for students. Students comment positively on the supportive, helpful and friendly staff.
- The range of courses is satisfactory and provides appropriate progression routes for students. Progression rates into employment and higher education are high. However, there is a limited range of vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3 to provide employability skills over the broad sports industry.
- The college recruits from a wide geographical region and provides good sports facilities and a successful male football academy. The enrichment programme is satisfactory, although not all students' interests are accommodated and there are too few sports opportunities for female students.
- Guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Effective additional learning support is provided to students who have been identified as requiring it during the initial assessment process. However, initial advice and guidance are

ineffective in ensuring that all students are placed on appropriate courses for their needs and abilities.

- Leadership and management are good. Under effective leadership, course teams evaluate their performance accurately and self-critically. In the current year, challenging action planning and systematic monitoring of progress are leading to an improvement in standards.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Currently, there are too few female students on sports programmes. However, the college has well-developed plans to offer more sports and to increase their promotion to raise participation of under-represented groups.

What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 to ensure that more students achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that all theory lessons use a variety of learning and assessment activities to provide appropriate challenge to all students.
- Expand the curriculum offer at level 1 and improve the industry-specific qualifications available for students in sports and fitness industries.
- Ensure that outcomes from initial assessment, and accurate advice and guidance, are used effectively to enrol students on to the most appropriate course for their needs and abilities.
- Increase the recruitment of female students onto sports courses by ensuring that the curriculum is relevant to their needs and interests and is promoted effectively.

Business, administration and law

Grade 4

Context

31. Of the 213 students currently following full-time courses in business, 183 take vocational courses and 30 are studying AS- or A-level courses in business, law or accounting. Of the 183 students on vocational courses, 171 are full-time students aged 16 to 18, studying towards an introductory course in business, or diplomas in business at level 1 or 2. Around 70% of current full-time students are working towards the national diploma in business.

Key findings

- Outcomes for students are inadequate. The overall success rate for students on business-related courses declined in 2008/09 to 62.9%, significantly below the national average. On the most popular course, the national diploma, the success rate fell to 69% from 80%, which is below the national average. However, the success rate for A-level business has improved and is now slightly above average.
- Punctuality at lessons is poor and attendance is low. Attendance on most courses in business is failing to meet the college target of 85%. The notable exception is in A-level accounting, where 93% attendance is recorded. Student punctuality remains a significant area for improvement.
- The standard of students' work, both in lessons and in assignments, is mostly satisfactory. Students' progress is broadly in line with that predicted from their prior attainment. Students on vocational courses develop appropriate work-related skills and those on A-level courses often demonstrate good understanding of complex topics.
- Progression of students onto higher level courses is good. In 2008/09, 70% of students progressed from level 1 to 2 and 85% from level 2 to 3. Over 80% of students progressed from level 3 to higher education.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but inconsistent across the subject area. In the best lessons, effective strategies engage students in a range of stimulating activities and students contribute with confidence to classroom discussions. However, there are too many lessons that are only satisfactory, with uninspiring teaching and limited activities that do not challenge students sufficiently.
- Guidance and support are inadequate. Course teams have recently introduced electronic recording and tracking of students' progress, but this is yet to be used consistently or fully. Most students are aware of their target grades and how to improve upon their work. However, short-term targets are sometimes vague, dates are missing from the actions or are not monitored and updated frequently.
- The college does not use initial assessments of students' basic skills, or rigorous entry criteria, sufficiently well to inform the advice and guidance students

receive on enrolment. Too many students are enrolled onto courses that are inappropriate to their needs or abilities.

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Actions have been taken very recently to change course management responsibilities in order to improve the performance, but it is still too early to see any impact from these changes. While the college has implemented various initiatives to improve punctuality, attendance and retention, these have not yet resulted in any significant signs of improvement.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Managers have recently identified areas for development and initiatives are now in place to bring about improvement. However, it is still too early to judge their impact.

What does John Ruskin College need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff and students adhere closely to the strategies to improve attendance and retention in order that more students achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that lessons are interesting and challenging in order to improve the interest levels of students on their courses.
- Ensure that target setting with students is of a consistently high quality in order that both staff and students can monitor students' progress effectively.
- Ensure that initial assessment and rigorous entry criteria are used effectively prior to enrolment in order that students are placed on programmes at the appropriate level.
- Ensure that managers and staff maintain a high focus on improving the quality of provision of vocational courses.

Information about the inspection

32. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the college's vice principal, curriculum and quality, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on students and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires students had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions and tutorials. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the college offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
John Ruskin College

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners					
Full-time learners	940	0	838	102	0
Part-time learners	428	80	0	109	239
Overall effectiveness	4	3	4	3	N/A
Capacity to improve	3				
Outcomes for learners	4	3	4	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4				
How well do learners progress?	4				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3				
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	3				
Quality of provision	3	3	3	3	N/A
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3				
Leadership and management	4	3	4	4	N/A
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4				
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	3				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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