

Ruskin Sports College – A Community High School

Ruskin Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 7JT

Inspection dates 17–18 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement dipped in 2012 and students are not making the progress they should in English and mathematics from their different starting points. Boys achieve less well than girls. Students at an early stage of learning English do not make enough progress in lessons.
- Although the quality of teaching is improving, it is not consistently good. Teachers do not always plan activities that meet the needs of every student: often, most students in the class complete the same work.
- Marking is not consistently regular and does not provide students with clear guidance on how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.
- Although improving, attendance is still below the national average.
- Senior leaders monitor students' attainment systematically. However, they do not use information about students' progress to check whether actions taken to improve achievement have really made a difference.
- Available data do not give a clear enough picture of students' progress in every subject and year group. As a result, governors cannot hold senior leaders to account as well as they could for students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been broadly average in recent years.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in textiles, geography, maths and drama.
- Behaviour and safety are good because students are keen to learn and get on well with each other and staff.
- The headteacher focuses on the right priorities because she has a realistic understanding of the school's performance in relation to other schools. Robust actions have been taken to improve the quality of teaching and manage teachers' performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and spoke with a representative from the local authority, who supports the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the views of 28 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 30 replies were received.
- Inspectors looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds; students from White and Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and any other White background are the largest other minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average. Increasing numbers of students who are at an early stage of learning English have very recently joined the school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Nineteen students in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site, alternative provision on mainly level one courses for part of their learning at Reaseheath College and South Cheshire College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better, in order to accelerate students' progress in English and mathematics, by making sure:
 - teachers use information about students' progress when they plan lessons so that the work is precisely matched to the abilities of all students within the class
 - teachers implement strategies to close achievement gaps between boys and girls and for students at an early stage of learning English
 - students receive clear and regular feedback on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Further improve attendance rates by:
 - closely monitoring plans to improve attendance and refining systems to support students' good attendance where necessary.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - teachers are provided with training so that they have the expertise to raise the achievement of students at an early stage of learning English
 - subject leaders take full responsibility for monitoring and evaluating teaching in their areas
 - senior leaders use information about students' progress to check whether actions taken to improve students' achievement have really made a difference
 - governors receive the specific information they need about students' progress in every year group so that they can more effectively hold senior leaders to account for students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been in line with national averages in recent years. However, in 2012 students' achievement dipped sharply and is judged to require improvement. The number of students making expected progress in both English and mathematics fell short of that expected nationally. Too few students made better than expected progress. Girls outperformed boys and the gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium and that of their peers in school widened.
- The school's projections for 2013 indicate Year 11 students are likely to attain overall results which are in line with national averages.
- Senior leaders have taken action to improve students' achievement in English, including using the expertise of a member of the governing body to conduct a thorough subject review. A monthly sub-committee now meets to review progress in English. As a result, achievement is beginning to rise.
- In mathematics students are entered early for GCSE examinations. Students who have the potential to achieve the best grades are given every possibility to do so.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus make broadly similar progress to their peers.
- Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well. However, students who are new to the school and at an early stage of learning English do not make enough progress in lessons because not all teachers have the necessary skills to cater for their needs.
- Current data indicate that students eligible for the pupil premium are now making better progress. This is because additional funding has been spent wisely on a range of initiatives including extra support for students' literacy and numeracy, free music tuition and subsidising school trips. As a result, the achievement gap is closing. In Year 10 these students are now only a quarter of a GCSE grade behind their peers in English and marginally ahead in mathematics.
- Students' skills in reading have improved as a result of the 'Better Reading Partners' initiative which is delivered by teaching assistants. Improvements in students' reading ages are also the result of effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding. All students in the targeted group are making expected progress or better.
- Students who attend courses away from school for part of their learning are well monitored to make sure they are benefiting from the provision and gaining qualifications. Their attendance is carefully checked.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it is still judged to require improvement because it is not consistently good enough across the school to ensure that all students make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- Teachers do not always plan activities which meet the differing needs of students. In these lessons the majority of students complete the same work and do not make the progress of which they are capable. In contrast, students who have very recently joined the school at an early stage of learning English spend time translating key words in booklets which have little relevance to the work of their classmates. There is often little monitoring of their progress by teachers, although bilingual staff have been appointed to support their overall achievement.
- The quality of marking is too variable. A number of teachers provide little marking beyond a tick and an occasional comment. In contrast, other teachers provide very regular and detailed marking which clearly identifies what students need to do to improve their work.

- Some teachers use assessment activities particularly skilfully to support students' outstanding achievement. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson students made outstanding progress in developing their confidence when speaking to an audience by working together to improve a performance piece. In design and technology students achieve well by making excellent use of tablet computers to both self-assess their progress and review the work of their peers.
- In the best lessons relationships are excellent. Teachers use humour well and ensure that all students get on with their work because they feel their learning is relevant. For example, students' achievement in a Year 8 geography lesson was outstanding because they used their local knowledge to analyse and evaluate types of crime in the streets where they live. Students in Year 10 citizenship enjoyed discussing topical issues, which they had identified for their assessed campaigns, with the local Member of Parliament who recently visited the school. This supported the development of students' social skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour and safety are typically good because students are keen to learn. Students get on well with each other and with their teachers. They are welcoming to visitors and respectful of the school environment.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced dramatically because of senior leaders' close focus on improving behaviour. Persistent absence is decreasing as a result of the school's work with all parents and, in particular, the families of students whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable. Although students' overall attendance is improving, it remains below the national average.
- Students say they feel safe at school and parents agree. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying that they might encounter, including cyber-bullying. Students are clear that racist attitudes are not a feature of the school. Students say senior leaders take bullying seriously, but they are less sure about what happens as a result of investigations because leaders do not always communicate their actions effectively to students.
- Students speak positively about the work of the school council in arranging rewards visits. A key factor in improving attendance and good behaviour has been the positive promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The new 'remove room' is working well for occasional misbehaviour but a tiny minority of students require more support to develop strategies to modify their behaviour.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching is not good and students are not yet making sufficient progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher is absolutely realistic in her assessment of the school's performance and has a clear focus on the right priorities. Robust actions taken to monitor the performance of teachers are improving the quality of teaching and demonstrate senior leaders have the capacity to improve the school further.
- Leaders have good plans for improvement but they are not systematically using the wealth of data available to assess if actions taken to improve students' achievement have really made a difference. Leaders at all levels do not yet have a clear enough picture of students' progress in every subject and year group.
- Subject leaders have been working hard to revise schemes of work to better engage students' interest. They are now taking more responsibility for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their areas.

- Procedures for performance management meet requirements, relate to Teachers' Standards and have brought the school into line with other schools. There is a good link between classroom performance and salary progression. Staff on upper pay scales have responsibility for driving forward an aspect of whole-school improvement but this is still at an early stage in development.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and accurately. During the inspection senior leaders gave good-quality feedback to teachers about how teaching could be better. Senior leaders have not been afraid to tackle underperformance. Training time is used to share good practice amongst staff.
- External support is used well to validate senior leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The curriculum is flexible because good partnership working with local colleges has enabled a small number of students to undertake vocational learning which meets their needs and interests. All students in Year 11 undertake work experience.
- Good levels of challenge, advice and support are provided to the headteacher by the local authority.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring considerable experience in education and business to the school and undertake appropriate training. The governing body recognises that it needs to be provided with clear information about the progress of students in every year group so that its members can better hold school leaders to account for students' levels of progress. Governors understand the school's arrangements for the management of teachers' work and the link between good teaching and salary progression. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and ensure all requirements regarding safeguarding are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111417
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	405336

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	555
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Minshall
Headteacher	Ella Brett
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2011
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