

The John of Gaunt School

Wingfield Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 9EH

Inspection dates 17–18 April 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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 requires improvement because students make no more than average progress during their time at school. At least one in four students do not make as much progress as they should. Students' attainment at the end of Year 11 is average and, apart from in mathematics, standards are only rising slowly.
- The gap between the attainment and progress of students receiving additional government funding and others is wider than average. Recent improvements in allocating resources to this group have not yet had a significant impact on these students' achievement.
- Governors provide helpful support and have good skills, but members do not challenge the school sufficiently about achievement.
- Teaching requires improvement. Too many lessons do not challenge all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. The pace of lessons can be slow and students do not learn as much as they should.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Fewer than average numbers of students reach higher grades. Students make only average progress because teaching does not challenge them to learn to the best of their abilities.
- The work of leaders and managers has not improved teaching and progress sufficiently. Checks made on teaching lack rigour so there are too many inconsistencies in teachers' work.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. There are constructive relationships throughout the school and students say they feel safe. All forms of bullying are very rare and thoroughly dealt with by staff if they should occur.
- Students are well cared for and the school provides a haven for many of them. They appreciate the strong support they receive in their personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 50 lessons taught by 36 teachers and undertook four joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, teachers, the headteacher and senior managers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors examined numerous school documents including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 81 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| John Carnaghan, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Trevor Woods | Additional Inspector |
| Stephanie Matthews | Additional Inspector |
| Shahnaz Maqsood | Additional Inspector |
| Peter Clifton | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The John of Gaunt School is a larger than average-sized secondary school. It became an academy in April 2012.
- When its predecessor school, The John of Gaunt School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals) is 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 also above average.
- The school uses alternative, off-site provision for a small number of students.
- The school receives Year 7 catch-up programme funding for just over 50 students who did not attain Level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise students' achievement through:
 - planning learning activities more thoroughly so as to provide work at the correct level to meet all students' needs, including disabled students, those with special educational needs and those with higher abilities
 - keeping up a brisk pace throughout lessons by setting high expectations for students' progress
 - reducing the amount of time teachers talk so that students have more opportunities to work independently
 - making sure that marking always provides students with clear advice on the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the impact of leadership and management by:
 - rigorously following up areas for concern in teaching to eliminate weaknesses more rapidly
 - making sure that the pupil premium is spent effectively to close the gap in achievement between students who are eligible for this funding and others.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with attainment that is below average. During their time at school most students' progress is average, although there is some variation between subjects. Attainment at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 is similar to the national average. However, attainment in English and mathematics was below average in 2012, although there is evidence of an improving picture, particularly in mathematics, this year.
- Several groups of students' achievement requires significant improvement; they do not have as equal an opportunity to succeed as others. In 2012, the attainment and progress of Year 11 students who were known to be eligible for the pupil premium were below the national average for this group. This year, the school has acted to improve how it allocates these funds to meet students' specific learning needs, but this has yet to have a significantly positive impact on this group's achievement.
- The progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs was also below average in 2012, as was that of higher attaining students. This is due to teaching that is frequently insufficiently planned to offer the right degree of challenge to more able students or provide the correct support to those who need help with their learning. Weakness in organising the activities of teaching assistants who are allocated to support those with special educational needs also contributes to the slower than expected progress of this group.
- The school has an early entry policy in GCSE mathematics. This motivates students and has proved effective in starting to raise mathematics attainment this year.
- Most students are competent readers. Those who have difficulty reading fluently, particularly in Year 7, receive well-planned intensive support as part of the Year 7 catch-up programme so they make good progress. This effective work assists this group in all of their studies, as they become more adept at understanding written texts.
- Small numbers of students receive alternative provision off site. They benefit from a curriculum that is well adapted to their needs and from working in small groups so that they achieve well.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Students' attainment is similar to national averages but fewer than expected numbers of students gain higher A*, A and B grades. This is because sixth form teaching is inconsistent and does not always promote good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not plan well enough to promote good progress for all groups of students. Their questions are frequently targeted at middle ability students, so they can be too easy for some and incomprehensible to others. Questions often lack challenge and students are reduced to guessing the answer that teachers want, rather than thinking creatively.
- The failure to prepare work for students of all abilities is detrimental to progress, for example when students do not understand the work they are supposed to do or when there is not enough of a challenge to keep the more able ones working at full stretch. Inadequate planning also means that teaching assistants' skills are not fully used; they are frequently unaware of what the lesson is about and what teachers require them to do, so they cannot prepare adequately to help those who most need it.
- Teachers tend to talk for too long in many lessons, reducing students to the role of passive learners and their attention can flag. Despite this, behaviour remains positive.
- In many lessons, especially in the sixth form, there are limited opportunities for students to work independently. Students report they enjoy learning through practical activities in subjects such as art and physical education, but too few other subjects offer chances to investigate practically and work independently.

- A good physical education lesson provided a clear example of how students' learning can thrive when well-planned, independent activities are carefully prepared. Year 11 students, in the role of sports leaders, taught a large group of visiting primary school pupils a number of exercises on a well-planned circuit set up in the sports hall. The students were mature, calm and well prepared and needed no staff intervention to deliver a satisfying and enjoyable experience to many younger pupils.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement. There are examples of outstanding practice, but many lessons do not match learning activities to students' capabilities and sometimes teachers' expectations are not high enough, reducing opportunities for them to progress quickly and so attain higher levels.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are particularly skilled at telling students how their work matches National Curriculum levels or examination grades. This helps to develop students' understanding of where they stand against national yardsticks and gives them an idea of their progress.
- Marking is variable; some is very helpful and sets clear targets for the next steps. However, in too many books, marking does not give students enough advice on the best way they could improve their work.
- Typically, lessons have a respectful learning environment. Students are receptive and keen to learn. They enjoy their studies and have constructive relationships with their teachers and fellow students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students correctly report that behaviour is consistently good, both in classrooms and around the school. Parents and carers also hold favourable views of behaviour and very few have any concerns. There is an atmosphere of trust in the school; students are very confident in the staff's ability and willingness to help them when required.
- Lessons are generally calm and typified by students' mature behaviour and enthusiasm for learning. They work happily as instructed in groups, pairs or independently. Behaviour for learning in the sixth form is excellent.
- Teachers manage students with assurance; their calm and courtesy are infectious and any disruption by students is most unusual.
- The same is true of bullying of all kinds, including racist bullying and victimisation by mobile phone. Students say that any rare incidents are taken extremely seriously by all staff and quickly and effectively addressed.
- Students say they feel safe at school because of the positive atmosphere. They show a good understanding of how to avoid risk in their everyday lives and appreciate the numbers of staff who are on duty around the site at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Attendance has risen and is now close to the national average. Students arrive at school punctually.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and staff share high ambitions for the school. However, they are limited in their abilities to tackle areas of weakness because the checks they make on the school are not rigorous enough, providing an overoptimistic picture of its strengths and underestimating weaknesses.
- Leaders make too few checks on teaching and these lack the depth needed to provide an accurate picture of weaknesses that require addressing. The school has prepared numerous very useful and relevant guides to better teaching but does not check that these initiatives are being used. For example, its excellent advice on how to use various questioning techniques to stimulate learning has had little impact on teachers' day-to-day questions in classrooms.

- A tendency to overemphasise areas of success identified in assessment information at the expense of tackling areas of concern also prevents the school from improving as quickly as it would like. Nevertheless, the headteacher and senior leadership team are implementing actions to raise attainment and improve teaching. As a result, some attainment is starting to rise, but the impact of these developments is not yet fully evident. The school's work to promote a good climate for learning, its understanding of areas for development and its planning for the future ensure it has the capacity to improve.
- Staff work very effectively together to encourage learning and to foster good relationships and a caring environment for all students. This is fully acknowledged by students, parents and carers. Creative initiatives, such as employing local workmen to help teach building skills to a group of students, offer good opportunities for students who might otherwise become disaffected to learn well.
- Leaders of the sixth form are aware of the issues that limit these students' progress but have not dealt with them rapidly enough. However, there is some evidence of success in the recent improvements in AS-level results in 2012.
- The school has retained strong links with the local authority since becoming an academy and uses many of its services to support its activities.
- The school uses its good understanding of its students to provide a relevant and engaging range of subjects that are adapted to their needs. For example, the 'pathways' offered to students as they move into Year 10 ensure that they follow an appropriate combination of courses during Key Stage 4. Links with a nearby college help the school to offer courses that would not be available otherwise, such as some basic vocational courses. The success of the interesting mix of courses available in the sixth form is demonstrated in the rising number of students entering Year 12.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. International links, for example with a school in Morocco, develop students' cultural awareness and understanding, and ensure they appreciate that any form of discrimination is unacceptable. Subjects contribute well to spiritual and moral development; a Year 11 religious education lesson stimulated intense discussion over the rights and wrongs of capital punishment. Well-organised assemblies contribute to the family feel of the school and the positive relationships that are evident everywhere – these are a good testimony to students' strong social development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - members of the governing body have a clear understanding of assessment information on students' attainment and progress but have not challenged the school sufficiently to raise achievement
 - governors understand the purpose of pupil premium funding. They have been a part of a group focusing on how this additional money should best be spent to meet the particular academic needs of this group of students
 - governors understand the links between teachers' performance and pay and ensure these are appropriately matched. Members have taken opportunities to improve their skills through attending local authority training courses
 - members of the governing body have a good grasp of safeguarding matters; their rigorous work on this has helped to ensure that the school meets all statutory safeguarding and child protection requirements.

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

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| Unique reference number | 138020 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 412798 |

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

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|---|---------------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1271 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 168 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Eerke Boiten |
| Headteacher | Andy Packer |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
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