

The John of Gaunt School

Wingfield Road, Trowbridge, BA14 9EH

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has provided highly effective leadership to bring about rapid improvements at the school.
- Senior leaders communicate the highest of expectations. They have provided well-targeted training for staff, which has improved the quality of teaching and raised students' achievement.
- Achievement is good. Students of all abilities receive high-quality individual support that meets their needs well and, as a result, they make good progress.
- Teachers know students well and plan learning activities that engage and excite them. Relationships are strong and students respect the staff. Consequently, students' progress is unhindered and learning is maximised.
- Students' behaviour is good and they feel safe. They are typically polite and courteous. A positive ethos permeates throughout the school.
- The sixth form is good. As the quality of teaching has improved across the school, including in the sixth form, students' achievement has risen and is now good.
- Leaders at all levels have effectively brought about positive change at the school. The governing body supports leaders well and provides an appropriate level of challenge to maintain the strong rate of improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers are not yet enabling all students to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Marking does not always inform students of how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.
- Students do not take account of and act on the comments in teachers' marking to improve their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 56 lessons and conducted short visits to lessons. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, leaders with subject responsibilities, members of the governing body and groups of students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on students' achievement, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 116 responses to the online Parent View survey, three letters from parents, one telephone call from a parent and 84 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Wring	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional Inspector
Lynne Thorogood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The John of Gaunt School is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The school increased the size of its senior leadership team in September 2013 by appointing three extra assistant headteachers. The school's deputy headteacher supports The Grange School, Bristol, having been seconded as interim principal for three days each week.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportions of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and students with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics.
- Some students access alternative provision at Wiltshire College, Westbury On-Track, Educ8, Larkrise Farm and Rowderford Special School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further by delivering high-quality teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - activities provide opportunities for all students to maximise their learning
 - marking informs students about the quality of their work and explains what they need to do to improve
 - students have opportunities to reflect and act upon the comments in teachers' marking in order to improve the quality of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are significantly lower than average. The proportion of Year 11 students who attain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is in line with the national average.
- The progress students make across most subjects is good. Year 11 results in English in 2013 were not as good as in mathematics but, due to the recent improvement in the quality of teaching, the progress that students are currently making has accelerated and they are now achieving well. Students also achieve particularly well in art, communication studies and physical education.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved in recent years. Evidence from students' work and the school's own data indicates that it is now good.
- The school has implemented many new initiatives to ensure that staff know each student's individual needs. Strong support is provided for students who may find the transition to secondary school challenging through a nurture group which is working well to develop and improve students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- An individual learning department works effectively with a range of students across all year groups to develop their reading and writing skills. It also focuses strongly on supporting their social and emotional needs.
- The school provides good support to all students, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled students and those with special educational needs and students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding. The quality of support and teaching provided is of a very high quality, which enables these students to do well.
- As a result of these successful initiatives, the gap between the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers has narrowed significantly. These students are currently leaving school around half a grade behind their peers in English and mathematics. This is a good achievement and demonstrates the school's strong commitment to preparing all of its students for adult life.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported extremely well and make good progress.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- Most-able students achieve well including those in receipt of the pupil premium funding. Work in their books shows that they regularly tackle and solve challenging problems, particularly in mathematics, which extends their thinking and deepens their learning.
- A small number of students are educated at other institutions. This provision is carefully considered by the school to ensure it is appropriate for the students. Their development is closely monitored and they make good progress and achieve well.
- Students show a real determination and resilience in lessons. Their positive attitudes to learning allow lessons to proceed at an appropriate pace, which maximises their learning time.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey feel that their child is making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved and is now good with some that is outstanding, including in the sixth form.
- Teachers' planning is of a high quality and shows that they know individual students well. Teachers provide learning activities that capture students' interest and pose a good level of

challenge.

- When students are inspired to learn they contribute exceptionally well, enabling them to rapidly gain new knowledge and understanding. In a Year 10 lesson, students were learning about the judicial system and how courts make judgements. The students really entered into the spirit of the activity by taking on the different roles in the court room. They exuded passion and enjoyment and made outstanding progress through their clear understanding of each other's roles and how each contributes towards the overall verdict. At the end of the lesson, one student approached the teacher and said, 'Thank you for a really exciting lesson.'
- Relationships are very strong across the school and particularly so in lessons. There is a good level of respect with students willingly complying with their teachers' instructions.
- On occasion, learning activities do not give students sufficient opportunity to maximise their progress. For example, in one class the worksheets required students to select the missing word from a given list, which limited the students' ability to show initiative.
- The school implemented an 'Even Better If' (EBI) marking policy in September 2013. The aim of this is that, when teachers mark students' work, they are made aware of how well they have achieved and are given the next steps to improve their learning further.
- Often the EBI comments are too simplistic; for example, 'use a pencil to draw diagrams', and 'underline the title'. These comments are aimed at improving presentation and not moving learning forward with guidance on how to improve. Some teachers provide students with a more challenging question to improve their learning but, sometimes, the students are not given the time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Teaching assistants receive good-quality training that supports their development well. These training opportunities enable them to provide high-quality support to students in lessons which contributes well to the progress that students make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good. They are typically polite and courteous. Their positive attitudes to learning and their good conduct contribute to a positive ethos throughout the school.
- Students are punctual to lessons, bring the correct equipment and comply with the school uniform policy. They speak highly of their school and their teachers.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The school has innovative student welfare structures. There are four staff who are each head of house with oversight of students' academic and pastoral needs. There is also a team of four support staff allocated to each house, a dedicated teaching assistant to oversee transition and a health and wellbeing pastoral manager in the team. These teams work well identifying students' social, emotional and family issues as they arise. They work effectively to support these students and their families to eradicate any barriers that may inhibit the progress they make.
- Students have a good awareness of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, particularly when they are communicating through online technology. Students comment that bullying is rare. They are confident that when incidents do arise they know whom to contact and say that the school deals with it quickly.
- Incidents of disruptive behaviour are rare. Attendance is improving and is now at the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent from school has reduced, but it is still higher than average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has provided strong leadership in his unrelenting pursuit to bring about rapid improvement at the school. He exudes the highest of expectations and, with highly effective

support from other senior leaders, has raised the quality of teaching and achievement.

- Staff have responded well to the high expectations and recognise the improvements that have been brought about. All the staff responding to the staff questionnaire said that they were proud to work at the school.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the key strengths of the school and the areas that need developing to improve the school further.
- There is, rightly, a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching. The recent additions to the senior leadership team have played an integral part in bringing about significant improvements. All staff, including support staff, have received training to develop their classroom skills. Much of this training is tailored to each person's individual needs and is closely monitored. The most effective teachers are used to support those colleagues who need to improve. This strategy is working well.
- Leaders with subject responsibilities acknowledge that there are high expectations of them and their departments, but they share in the school's aspirations. They monitor the work of their departments regularly through formal observations of students' learning, scrutiny of students' work and short visits to lessons. While teaching across subjects has improved, the quality of marking is still variable.
- The procedures to manage staff performance are robust and used to rigorously hold teachers to account for the students they teach. Teachers' performance targets are based around students' achievement and teachers' commitment to completing appropriate training to ensure that their work improves.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all students. It provides high-quality advice, support and care to address students' academic and social needs to enable all students to be able to achieve their potential. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Equal opportunities are particularly enhanced through high levels of student engagement in sport, art, music and building links with schools in other countries.
- Students take on a range of leadership roles, including membership of the school council, sports leaders, charity work and peer mentoring, which enables them to experience and develop their leadership skills while providing good quality support for other students. The head boy and head girl report regularly to the governing body to ensure students' views are shared with leaders.
- The school draws on a range of effective external support from outstanding schools and individuals which has enabled it to improve rapidly.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development, particularly with regards to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors implement a strict pay policy ensuring that they reward the best practitioners and withhold pay awards for any underperformance. They administer the additional funding from the government well. They hold the school's leaders to account for its allocation and monitor the impact each initiative has on raising standards. All safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory 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

Unique reference number	138020
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	432148

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

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	1264
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eerke Boiten
Headteacher	Andrew Packer
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 April 2013
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