

Inspection of a good school: The John of Gaunt School

Wingfield Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 9EH

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

The John of Gaunt School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Ben Rhodes. This school is part of Equa Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Skipp, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Roger Townsend.

What is it like to attend this school?

The John of Gaunt School has a strong sense of community. The values of kindness, positivity and belonging underpin school life. The school teaches pupils to be respectful of adults and each other. It is an inclusive school. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated. The school has set out clear behaviour expectations. Pupils appreciate this clarity and the fairness of the behaviour system. As a result, pupils behave well, enabling classrooms to be calm and focused on learning.

The school is ambitious for pupils to achieve well and be prepared for adult life. It nurtures the talents and interests of pupils and students in the sixth form. For example, there are opportunities to join the orchestra, choir and steel drum bands. Pupils perform in drama productions and compete in a range of sports. Pupils can complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award as well as enter outdoor competitions that test their navigational skills and resilience. Visits, such as astronomy fieldtrips, bring the curriculum to life.

Pupils are proud to welcome visitors to their school and talk passionately about their experiences. No school tour is complete without a visit to the school goats or an introduction to the school pets. 'Once a student of JOG, always a student of JOG' is a phrase used by staff that epitomises the sense of belonging at this school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The John of Gaunt curriculum is ambitious. Subject areas aim for pupils to gain life skills as well as study for external qualifications. For example, the English curriculum develops pupils' communication skills, and the geography curriculum prepares pupils to be global citizens. The school has recently made significant alterations to the modern foreign

languages curriculum. Leaders aim to increase further the number of pupils continuing with languages into key stage 4. This will increase the proportion of pupils studying the suite of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate.

Assessment is woven into the curriculum design. The school has set out exactly what pupils will learn and in what order. Across the curriculum, pupils take part in regular 'GEM' assessment activities. These enable teachers to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Activities are then planned to embed learning so that pupils can achieve mastery. However, some pupils lack confidence in remembering their learning over time. This hinders their ability to grasp new content quickly or reapply knowledge to new situations.

The school accurately identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and support staff know the needs of these pupils well. The specialist resource base enables pupils to study the same broad curriculum as their peers while also receiving specialist support. For example, pupils get extra help with speech and language or reading.

The John of Gaunt School values reading. Pupils read a broad range of books. These are deliberately chosen to include classic literature, diverse authors and non-fiction texts. Sixth-form students are reading buddies for younger pupils. Students share their love of stories and provide opportunities for pupils to connect across the school. The school identifies the weakest readers quickly. It provides effective support that builds pupils' confidence, accuracy and fluency with reading. The impact of this intervention is closely monitored so that pupils both catch up and continue to keep up with their peers.

The school is currently developing a character education curriculum based on the school aims. While this is in its infancy, it is building on the opportunities already provided by the school. For example, the school has a wide range of pupil groups that celebrate diversity and ensure that pupils have a voice. However, some pupils are reluctant to take up these enrichment activities or additional study support opportunities.

Pupils follow an age-appropriate personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and to look after their own physical and mental health. Sixth-form students receive mental health training so that they are equipped to help themselves and support others.

Pupils receive extensive support to raise their aspirations and plan their future steps in education or employment. This includes work experience, local employer visits and higher education programmes. Students in the sixth form particularly value the personal advice and guidance they receive. They take part in a volunteering programme to help develop transferable skills. Students enjoy the feeling that they are giving back to the school and local community.

The trust provides staff with a wide range of continuous professional development. This work is enhancing curriculum design and developing teaching skills. Leaders consider the workload and well-being of staff. The Equa Multi Academy Trust values collaborative working across schools. It is providing both challenge and support to the school. The

school and trust staff are working together well to raise outcomes so that all pupils achieve well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have difficulty recalling their learning over time. This hinders their ability to link together concepts and ideas. As a result, these pupils do not successfully reapply their knowledge and skills to new situations. The trust should ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to recall and embed their learning.
- Some pupils are not taking up the additional opportunities provided by the school. This means they do not benefit from aspects of the wider curriculum for character development or the study support programmes offered. The trust should further encourage pupils to take part in all aspects of school life.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138020
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10307253
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,261
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Roger Townsend
CEO of the Trust	Paul Skipp
Headteacher	Ben Rhodes
Website	www.johnofgauntschool.org
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has had significant changes in senior leadership in the last three years. The current headteacher took up post in April 2023.
- The school joined the Equa Multi Academy Trust in April 2023.
- The school has a specialist resource base for pupils with communication and interaction needs. This provision opened in September 2023. Currently, there are 10 places in this provision.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and nine unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff, trust executive leaders, trustees and governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, modern foreign languages and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met leaders responsible for pupils with SEND and reviewed plans that support these pupils. They visited the specialist resource base.
- Inspectors spoke to students in the sixth form, met members of the student leadership team and visited sixth-form lessons as part of the deep dives.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the local governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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