

The John of Gaunt School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126462
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340983
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Tom Winskill

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1238
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Avison
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Packer
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
School address	Wingfield Road Trowbridge BA14 9EH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 lessons or part lessons taught by 40 teachers. They met with groups of students, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including monitoring records, improvement plans and school policies, and looked at 236 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of students' learning and progress in specialist subjects, in other curriculum areas and in the sixth form
- the extent to which students are able to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- the extent to which aspects of care, guidance and support bring about exceptional outcomes for some groups of students
- the extent to which the school holds middle leaders to account for their work and how the governing body holds the school to account for its performance.

Information about the school

This school is above average in size and serves the town of Trowbridge, together with two secondary schools nearby. The school has been a science, mathematics and computing specialist school since 2004. Most students are of White British heritage with around 9% from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students whose first language is not or is believed not to be English is below the national average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average. The school is a member of the West Wiltshire Federation of secondary schools and the Trowbridge Area Schools collaborative of primary and secondary schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school which has improved a great deal since the last inspection. There is a positive climate for learning in the school. Students are helped to thrive and are encouraged to succeed. The outstanding care, guidance and support include provision that enables a range of students who might otherwise find school very difficult to participate in school life and learn well. Partnerships with agencies supporting some students potentially in need of additional help and their families make an excellent contribution to this work.

Good teaching, supported by the effective use of assessment, helps students to learn effectively and make good progress. However, some teaching does not fully engage all students. As a result, opportunities are missed to raise attainment further by bringing about outstanding learning and progress. Students behave well, particularly when teaching is good or better, and they are positively engaged in their learning. Individual students' progress in each subject is monitored effectively. This information is used well to plan effective support to help those in danger of underachieving to get back on track. The curriculum meets the needs of most groups of students. The school's partnership work with neighbouring schools to extend the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form contributes well to students' good achievement. However, programmes and progression routes do not always meet the highly specific needs of individual students and some students are unable to continue with their studies as the programmes they require are not normally available to students of their age. Subjects such as art, music and religious education, together with the tutorial and assembly programme, ensure that the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, although students have a good understanding of the principles of healthy lifestyles, they do not always apply these principles themselves.

The school has established strong capacity for improvement. A range of improvements made by the school since the last inspection, including raising attainment, increasing attendance and improving the sixth form, demonstrates the ability of school leaders to tackle barriers to improvement effectively. Well-thought-out school plans are sharply focused on bringing about further changes and are grounded in the school's thorough and systematic approach to evaluating all aspects of its work. An outstanding governing body fulfils its duties admirably, with high levels of commitment and a rigorous approach to ensuring that the school moves forward. The school's procedures for safeguarding are exemplary.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment from good to outstanding in each subject by:
 - providing tasks, activities and resources in lessons matched to students' aptitudes and prior attainment, so that they can make more rapid progress
 - ensuring that questioning in lessons engages all students
 - sharing best practice, including the use of students' self- and peer-assessment, between subjects.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum from good to outstanding by:
 - increasing the extent to which programmes and progression routes meet the needs of individual students
 - providing suitable programmes for those students who are ready to progress beyond the typical provision for students

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students behave well in lessons, tutorial periods and around the school at break and lunchtime. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions are few. In lessons, when they are engaged fully, students' behaviour can be excellent. For example, in a Year 10 geography lesson, students' concentration and effort were of the highest order as they wrestled with the challenging task of assessing each other's practice examination answers using a mark scheme. In a Year 8 physical education lesson, students listened attentively to instructions, responded well to questions and were keen to develop their cricket skills.

Students are friendly and polite and get on well with adults and their peers, which helps them to feel safe in school. The school's mixed-age tutor groups are contributing to the cohesive school community, although the quality of work done in tutorial periods is mixed. Students make a strong contribution to the local and wider communities through activities such as supporting local and international charities, practical conservation work on a local woodland and working as sports leaders in local primary schools.

Students' attendance has improved greatly since the last inspection. The number of students who are persistently absent has also fallen as a result of a highly effective collaboration between the school and the educational welfare service. Students are able to apply a range of skills, including literacy and numeracy, in different subjects to good effect. Those students who receive more intensive support to improve their basic skills make good progress in developing their literacy and number skills. Students have many opportunities to develop wider skills such as teamwork, working in small groups and making presentations. For example, Year 7 students in science

worked well in groups to discuss moral issues and Year 10 students in food technology presented their work to the whole class. The development of these skills and the good information, advice and guidance they receive contribute to their good preparation for the next stage of their lives. As a result, the vast majority of school leavers are either in further or higher education or have found employment or training.

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Despite having below average attainment on entry to the school, students achieve well and leave with standards of attainment in line with national averages. Most enjoy school. The progress made by students in the school's specialist subjects has improved since the last inspection and is now good. For example, in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, Year 9 students worked independently, with occasional, targeted support from the teacher to enable them to make good progress. They applied their literacy skills through the use of persuasive language in the websites they were designing. Effective support from the well-deployed teaching assistant in the same lesson ensured that students who spoke English as an additional language also made good progress.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson, a small number of students were helped by having a simplified worksheet and the effective in-class support of the teaching assistant. The highly effective support provided for some students has helped them overcome particular barriers to their learning, so that they have achieved highly and, in some cases, gone on to university.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is typically well planned, with well-organised lessons and clear learning objectives. Lessons often begin with a useful recap of previous work to help students build on their prior knowledge and understanding and interactive whiteboards are used effectively. In good or better lessons, activities are closely matched to the needs of the students. For example, in a good Year 10 art lesson, the most-able students were given more challenging tasks in anatomical drawing, while in an outstanding Year 9 music lesson, students worked on practical tasks which were matched to their level of ability and enabled them to practise enthusiastically, in order to achieve their targets. In the best lessons, imaginative, dynamic teaching inspires the students.

In a minority of lessons, teachers rely on a small number of students to answer questions, which means that others do not get fully involved. In some cases, questions require a one-word answer and so do not permit students to develop their thinking. As a result, students' progress in these lessons is satisfactory rather than good. Where teaching is most effective, teachers employ open questions and allow students time to think about their answers or discuss them with a partner. Learning is hindered for some students when they all have to do the same activity because the more able are not stretched and slower learners struggle to complete their work. Students in all subjects are aware of their target grades or levels and what they have to do to reach them. Assessment in lessons often makes effective use of peer assessment as students develop their own understanding by assessing the work of others.

The school's specialist status has expanded the courses available in science, mathematics and ICT. The school curriculum is under constant review in order to seek improvements such as the recent introduction of a learning to learn programme in Year 7. The curriculum provides a wide range of enrichment activities, which are open to all students and enhanced by the school's specialist status.

The school's underlying philosophy of seeking to help all students reach their potential is exemplified by its excellent care, guidance and support. The support provided for students making the move from primary school is thorough and highly effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

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The driving force behind the school's sustained improvement is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He is committed to improving the life chances of John of Gaunt students by improving the quality of their learning, ensuring that they can flourish as individuals and engaging with the local community. Other senior members of staff and, increasingly, subject leaders and heads of house are helping to translate this vision into reality. As a result, even those students who have complex and often challenging problems are welcomed, included and given every chance to succeed. This demonstrates the school's positive approach to promoting equal opportunities for all of its students. The school is active in tackling discrimination

Leaders and managers have high expectations of themselves and others which help maintain the pace of change. All staff are held accountable for their work and have clear objectives. The evaluation of the school's work is informed by highly effective monitoring and tracking of students' performance, accurate analysis of the quality of teaching, and information from students, parents and carers, and external agencies. This is exemplified in the school's approach to community cohesion, where a senior member of staff leads an effective programme of activities in tandem with the school's extended services provision. These are based on a thorough, ongoing audit and action plan designed to promote community cohesion in school and the wider community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Sixth form students make good progress as a result of good teaching which enables them to meet challenging targets. The curriculum meets the needs of most students and

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provides a wide choice of courses through collaboration with other local secondary schools. A particular strength of the sixth form is the contribution the students make to the school and to local and wider communities. For example, sixth formers provide support for younger students who speak English as an additional language, have supported the work of a primary school in India through the World Challenge programme, and work in the local community as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. The students feel well supported and enjoy their time in a sixth form which is well led, both on a day-to-day basis and in terms of its strategic development as an important element of the school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire provided a positive endorsement of the work of the school. Of the respondents, 92% indicated that they were happy with their child's experience at The John of Gaunt School. A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying at the school. However, these were outweighed by positive comments which were in line with inspectors' findings, such as: 'My daughter was bullied at primary school and was not looking forward to secondary school. I am pleased to say that she has thrived and continues to thrive with the exceptional support she has received.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The John of Gaunt School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 236 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	30	141	60	17	7	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	68	29	155	66	8	3	4	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	28	147	62	14	6	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	34	138	58	11	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	25	151	64	12	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	22	149	63	25	11	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	14	155	66	36	15	5	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	57	24	150	64	11	5	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	31	140	59	15	6	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	19	121	51	41	17	13	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	24	136	58	21	9	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	86	36	122	52	16	7	8	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	37	130	55	10	4	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The John of Gaunt School, Trowbridge, BA14 9EH

Following our recent inspection, I am pleased to report that we found your school to be a good school which has improved greatly in recent years. For example, your attendance and examination results have improved. You make good progress and learn well as a result of the good teaching you receive. You behave well, although this is better when teaching is good. You generally feel safe in school and the care, guidance and support the school provides are outstanding. You have an excellent headteacher and governors who are making sure that the subjects taught are the best ones for you.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make the following improvements:

- Help you make outstanding progress and do well in exams by making sure all teaching is as good as the best.
- Provide activities in lessons which are closely matched to your needs and get teachers to ask questions in class which involve everyone.
- Provide even more subjects and courses for you to choose from so that you can study more advanced courses if necessary.

Yours sincerely

Tom Winskill

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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