

John O' Gaunt School

Priory Road, Hungerford, RG17 0AN

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders have not brought about enough improvement since the previous inspection. The governing body has not rigorously held school leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Inconsistencies in leadership across the school over time have slowed down the rate of improvement in teaching and student achievement in different subjects.
- Students' progress has not always been checked accurately. Parents do not receive enough easily accessible information about the curriculum on the school's website.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough. Students are not always given work at the right level of challenge.
- When teaching fails to interest them, a minority of students are prone to become distracted and become involved in low-level disruption. Behaviour requires improvement.
- Not enough students make good progress or attain well by the end of Year 11, especially in mathematics. This includes disadvantaged students supported through additional funding. Students' basic skills in literacy and in mathematics are not consistently well developed, especially in the case of boys.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Too few students achieve the examination results they are capable of.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong and increasingly effective leadership; the pace of improvement is now increasing.
- The curriculum is well designed and provides students with a suitable range of courses.
- Students report that they feel safe at school and most enjoy their learning.
- Achievement in a range of subjects, including English and science, has improved in the past year.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 22 part-lessons were observed, including visits to an assembly and tutorial time. Meetings were held with: senior leaders, including the headteacher; middle leaders; members of the governing body, including the Chair; and three groups of students. In addition, a telephone conversation took place with a senior local authority officer, responsible for school improvement.
- Inspectors looked at: planning and self-evaluation documentation; information on students' progress and examples of students' work; and a range of policy documents.
- Inspectors took account of the 83 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). In addition, inspectors took account of the 43 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gill Bal	Additional Inspector
Anne Barrett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- John O' Gaunt is much smaller than most secondary schools. The small size of the school means that many teachers are required to teach outside of their main areas of expertise. The sixth form currently has only 17 students on roll, all of whom are in Year 13.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through statements and/or at school action plus is below average. The same is true of those supported at school action level.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific disadvantaged groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after) is below the national average. This represents about one in five students in the school.
- About one in ten of Year 7 students are supported by separate 'catch-up' funding. This is for those students who had not reached the expected levels in English and mathematics by the time they completed Year 6 in their primary schools.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- When needed, a small number of students attend a local college for their education. At present, this applies to just one student. The school also provides alternative on-site training solely for its own students who are experiencing difficulties in coping with the normal timetable, in a facility known as the 'Pod'.
- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been extensive changes both to teaching staff and with regard to leadership responsibilities. Several current leaders are relatively new in post, including two members of the senior leadership team. The headteacher took up post in September 2012. The Chair of the Governing Body took up his position at the start of the current academic year; he was previously the Vice-Chair.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - providing all students with work that is set at the right level of challenge
 - making sure that activities are consistently engaging so that students are motivated to do well and do not become easily distracted
 - ensuring that teaching assistants consistently make a greater overall contribution to students' learning
 - ensuring that marking consistently helps students to know how to improve the accuracy and overall quality of their work and their presentation skills.
- Raise achievement to at least good by:
 - improving students' basic skills in literacy and in mathematics, notably for boys
 - ensuring that all groups, including disadvantaged students supported by additional government funding, progress more rapidly and attain higher levels by the end of Year 11 in a range of subjects
 - ensuring students in the sixth form reach higher standards in their examinations.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management on raising standards by ensuring that:
 - the checks on students' progress made by staff and leaders are consistently accurate and are based on secure and reliable evidence
 - all leaders contribute equally effectively to rapid school improvements in teaching and achievement
 - parents are provided with useful and easily accessible information on the curriculum, including that relating to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - the governing body holds the school to account for its performance more rigorously, including for the achievement of disadvantaged students supported by additional funding.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in

order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not been able to bring about the necessary improvements quickly enough. Some progress is evident in most areas previously identified as weaknesses but there remains a lack of consistency in the quality of education the school provides.
- Teachers and leaders are now held to account much more rigorously for their performance through the strong leadership of the headteacher. This is reflected in the effective system for linking teachers' targets with pay increases. Where performance has been below expectations, inspection evidence shows that teachers rightly have not been rewarded financially.
- The system for tracking students' progress is now largely fit-for-purpose. However historically, not all of the checks on students' progress made by teachers which fed into the system were based on reliable evidence. Consequently, some evaluations of how well students were progressing proved to be inaccurate, notably last year's Year 11 group in mathematics. Improvements have already been put into place to create more reliable checks in the future.
- Leaders, including those responsible for subjects, have not made a consistently strong contribution to rapid improvement across the whole school over time. The headteacher and other senior leaders are aware of the need to ensure that leadership training and development remain a high priority, especially for those leaders new to post.
- The school's recent focus on improving the achievement and attitudes to learning of boys shows early signs of impact. The same is true of the decision to use strategies known to be effective in primary schools to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. The creative way in which Key Stage 4 option subjects have been organised gives students a wide range of choices given the small cohort sizes. The use of early entry for some subjects, where appropriate, has benefited a number of students, including the most able. Secure plans are in place for the implementation of the new National Curriculum at Key Stage 3, including the successful introduction of computing. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.
- In most respects, parents are given useful information by the school. This includes through the recently revised reporting system which gives clear, succinct evidence of achievement and attitudes to learning. The school website does not, however, explain the curriculum in a readily accessible form for parents. There is also insufficient information about how students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is to be achieved.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school over time and has provided useful guidance and support. At the present time, intensive support is being given to help secure rapid improvements in mathematics, where there is a new leader in post.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has faced some significant challenges since the previous inspection, notably in dealing with high turnover of staff and frequent changes in leadership roles. Nevertheless, the school has not secured improvement quickly enough and standards remain too variable. Consequently, the governing body has not held leaders to account for its performance with sufficient rigour.
 - The governing body knows how the additional government funding for disadvantaged students has been allocated, but is not clear enough about its impact. Governors have also not ensured that standards for this group are rising quickly enough or that gaps with other students are narrowing consistently.
 - Governors have a broad awareness of how well students achieve over time and how this compares with all schools nationally. They also have some appreciation of the quality of teaching and ensure that this has a clear link to teachers' salary progression.
 - Governors discharge their statutory duties effectively. They are aware of their duty to promote respect for people of all faiths, cultures and lifestyles and to help to prepare students for life in modern Britain. All current safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. When teaching fails to fully engage and motivate students, a minority are prone to become inattentive and distracted. On occasions, this leads to low-level

disruption of lessons.

- Most staff and the majority of parents believe that students are well behaved. However, a number of those students who were spoken to during the inspection report that behaviour does occasionally disrupt learning. This is also reflected in school records. Students also feel that some teachers are more effective in managing students' behaviour than others. No serious instances of disruption were witnessed during the inspection.
- Around the school, including at breaks and lunchtimes, most students typically behave sensibly and with consideration for others. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Students generally cooperate well with staff and with each other. Most report that they enjoy their learning.
- Students are well aware of the importance of tolerance and respect for people who are different from themselves. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to extend students' understanding of racial, religious and cultural diversity. This is achieved through the taught curriculum, assemblies, tutorials and activities which take place involving the wider community.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel that bullying incidents are infrequent. They are confident that staff manage any incidents which do occur effectively. Students know about different forms of bullying, including those related to social media and text messaging. They know how to keep themselves safe and stay safe. Regular checks are made to ensure that any students attending off-site training are safe.
- Most parents and staff who responded to the inspection questionnaires consider that students are kept safe in school.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that absences which have not been notified by parents are quickly followed-up.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time students do not make progress quickly enough in a range of subjects. While there are no aspects of teaching which are significantly weak, there are notable inconsistencies in how well students are taught across the school.
- Planning is generally sound and is improving. However, although teachers now have ample information on students' progress to draw upon, they are not always set tasks at the right level. This lack of consistency in the provision of suitable challenge limits the progress made by all groups of students, notably, but not exclusively, the most able, including in mathematics.
- Where teaching assistants are clear about their roles and what is expected of them, they make a useful contribution to students' learning. Inspection evidence indicates, however, that the effectiveness of these key staff is too variable. They do not always enable those students who require the most support to 'catch-up' quickly enough or make enough demands upon them.
- Marking has shown some improvement since the previous inspection but is still not consistently strong across the school. A particular weakness is a failure to highlight clearly enough for students their errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and subject-specific technical vocabulary. This contributes to some students' continuing lack of grasp of basic literacy skills.
- Not all teachers are equally insistent on high standards of presentation in written work. A notable exception to this was seen during the inspection in a Year 8 food technology class. The presentation of students' work was impressive. In addition, the marking seen was detailed and constructive and clearly highlighted technical words relating to the making of shortcrust pastry.
- Teachers typically have secure subject knowledge, including in those subjects which are not their main areas of expertise. Where students are given clear direction, suitable resources and sufficient time to deepen their understanding, students achieve well. In a Key Stage 4 textiles session, some very able students had produced high quality, beautifully presented notebooks detailing the development of their ideas.
- The quality of work seen in humanities subjects was also of a good standard, reflecting secure planning and an effective range of teaching strategies being used.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough students achieve well by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students who gain five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has remained below the national average for the last few years.

- The unvalidated 2014 results indicate that in English, rates of progress and the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades both increased. Similar improvements were seen in science and food technology. Attainment in art and French is consistently strong. However, achievement in mathematics dropped markedly and results in information and communication technology were also poor. This illustrates that there is still too much variability in how well students achieve in different subjects.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students supported by additional government funding is erratic. In the validated 2013 examination results, Year 11 students in this group attained the equivalent of one GCSE grade less than all students nationally in both English and mathematics. The gap with other students in the school was almost identical. This year's unvalidated results indicate that in 2014, the gaps narrowed significantly in English and science but widened markedly in mathematics.
- In other subjects, disadvantaged students achieved at least as well as their peers in 2014, notably in gaining vocational qualifications such as BTECs. At Key Stage 3, inspection evidence indicates that the gaps are slowly beginning to narrow. However, overall, the progress made by this group is not accelerating rapidly enough across the school.
- The most able students achieve at a broadly similar rate to their peers in English and mathematics. This group has done especially well in subjects such as French and history, where in 2014, there was a marked increase in the proportion of A*/A grades achieved. The early entry policy contributes effectively to most students' achievement.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve broadly in line with their peers. Boys continue to achieve relatively less well than girls, especially in subjects with a high literacy content, because their basic skills are not well developed. This situation is now beginning to improve, including for those students who are supported through 'catch-up' funding. The school's efforts to promote the importance of reading are also beginning to have some impact in raising standards.
- Over time, those very few Key Stage 4 students who attend college for some or all of their education benefit from this provision. Those who spend time in the 'Pod' typically make secure gains in confidence and self-discipline and are better disposed to learn.
- In 2014, there was some slight improvement in achievement in the sixth form at advanced level. However, students still do not consistently attain results that reflect their ability.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not achieve consistently well over time. There was some improvement in the provisional advanced level (A level) results in 2014, but in advanced supplementary (AS) courses results declined.
- Few students achieve the higher A* to B grades in either type of examination course, although students attain consistently well in art and design at A level. Overall, attainment is below that of all students nationally, and rates of progress are variable.
- The numbers of students who have applied to enter the sixth form has declined over time. A relatively high proportion of students begin courses in Year 12 but do not continue courses to A level in Year 13. The quality of advice and guidance given to students in Year 11 about course choices has recently improved, but over time has been too variable.
- Leadership in the sixth form is improving. In the past year, there has been an improvement in the range of courses designed to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Advice and guidance relating to careers and application to higher education have also shown some improvement.
- The Year 13 students spoken to during the inspection report that they feel well supported by leaders and that they are prepared adequately for life beyond school. This includes advice and guidance on how to stay safe. However, they expressed disappointment with the AS results which they achieved while they were in Year 12. In other respects, they have positive attitudes to learning.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is similar to that seen in the rest of the school. Students feel that target grades are too low and do not encourage them to aim high enough. They affirm, however, that teachers are now beginning to make greater demands upon them in their studies. Students also feel more is now being done by staff to improve general academic skills such as essay writing.

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	110050
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	449079

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	397
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Rothwell
Headteacher	Sarah Brinkley
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 November 2012
Telephone number	01488 682400
Fax number	01488 681283
Email address	office.jog@johnogauntschool.co.uk

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