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8 December 2014

Mrs Sarah Brinkley  
Headteacher  
John O'Gaunt School  
Priory Road  
Hungerford  
RG17 0AN

Dear Mrs Brinkley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John O'Gaunt School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- clarify and simplify the way that information is presented to ensure that the rates of progress made by groups of students can be monitored and improvements seen more easily
- ensure that consistency in marking and feedback improves more rapidly.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I held a telephone conversation with the local authority school improvement partner. The school improvement plans were evaluated. With you, I visited a number of

classrooms and talked to students. In addition I scrutinised a wide range of students' books and reviewed the single central record of teacher vetting checks.

## **Context**

Since the inspection one teacher has gone on maternity leave and a new teacher has joined the school to cover this post temporarily.

## **Main findings**

You have sensibly re-allocated responsibilities to senior leaders. Combined with the team's energy and determination to raise standards, this is beginning to bear fruit. Governors and the local authority reflect positively on the capacity of the new team.

You have focused relentlessly on ensuring that teachers' assessment of students' work is robust and accurate. Effective training and more stringent moderation mean that the accuracy of data is more secure. Leaders are now able to use these data to better track students' progress and offer support where it is needed. This is beginning to have an impact: the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers is starting to narrow. Nevertheless, the school's presentation of data to governors and other audiences lacks clarity and does not easily show how rates of progress are accelerating for all year groups. The inclusion of a very narrow set of Year 11 mathematics data dramatically skewed a recent review of this cohort's achievement. This made it impossible for governors to check how well students are doing.

Staffing issues in mathematics, combined with previously weak teaching, are continuing to have an adverse impact on students' achievement in this subject. An additional lead teacher will join the department in January. The new department leader has astutely carried out a forensic analysis of students' needs so that gaps in knowledge can be addressed. This has yet to show any impact on students' achievement in mathematics.

Leaders and the local authority have provided a range of well-targeted training for teachers focusing on higher levels of challenge and pace in lessons. This, in addition to an increasing amount of peer observation and sharing of good practice, is beginning to improve the quality of teaching.

Senior and middle leaders are rightly monitoring marking and students' work more intensively. You report that consistency has improved, particularly in English, but marking remains patchy. Teachers' comments are not always helpful in terms of improving rates of progress and students do not yet typically act on them. Teaching assistants are benefiting from a useful observation and training programme. As a result, disabled students with those with special needs are starting to make more rapid progress.

The school's action plan covers all areas for improvement. However, it is not always clear enough when actions will be completed and impact measured. This makes it more difficult for governors to check how things are improving.

The relatively new Chair of Governors has worked quickly and with determination to improve the work of the governing body. His weekly meetings with you are increasing his understanding and knowledge of the school's work. A new governor has been appointed with a specific brief to analyse data about students' achievement. The external governance review has begun and will be completed early next term. Further training for and re-structuring of the governing body are planned.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority (LA) is providing good support to the school. Formal, termly review meetings are supplemented by more regular visits to the school by the improvement officer. A lead practitioner in mathematics has been provided by the LA, and useful coaching work has been undertaken with middle leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**