

John O'Gaunt School

Priory Road, Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 0AN

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since academisation, leaders have been successful in driving up standards. As a result of their actions, teaching and pupils' outcomes are good.
- The headteacher has created a culture of higher ambition in which pupils are encouraged to reach their potential in a nurturing and inclusive way.
- The school's partnership with the Excalibur Academies Trust (EAT) makes a strong contribution to the school's ongoing improvement. Governors and trustees provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Most pupils benefit from good teaching that enables pupils to learn effectively. Consequently, most pupils are making good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects.
- The school has a warm, community feel, and relationships are strong. Staff know their pupils extremely well and support them effectively in their personal development.
- Leaders have tailored the curriculum to pupils' needs, encouraging higher aspirations. As a result, pupils are making more sustained progress, especially the most able.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a range of targeted interventions. As a result, they are generally making good progress from their starting points.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is a particular strength. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps.
- Safeguarding processes are very effective. Pupils and parents agree that pupils are safe in school.
- Pupils' progress in science is weaker than in other subjects, partly as a result of unstable staffing and a legacy of weaker teaching in the past.
- Some pupils, especially boys, typically enter the school with low levels of literacy. These pupils need more opportunities to develop their written and spoken skills in order to make better progress.
- Where teaching is less effective, some pupils lose focus, resulting in low-level disruption to learning. Exclusion rates, while stabilising, are still too high.
- Overall absence rates, including persistent absence, are higher than the national average. Leaders' strategies are leading to improvement, but actions are not evaluated sharply enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils, especially boys, to develop their written and spoken skills
- Address the remaining areas of weaker teaching, particularly in science, so that:
 - pupils' behaviour does not disrupt learning
 - exclusion rates reduce more quickly.
- Improve pupils' attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, by evaluating the impact of actions more sharply, and ensuring that they are effective.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and his senior team have created a nurturing and inclusive culture. Since academisation in 2016, staff, governors and parents agree that there has been a greater focus on higher expectations. As a result, the school has moved a very long way forward and pupils receive a good level of education.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are focusing on the right things to bring about consistent and sustained improvement. For example, the curriculum pathways from Year 7 onwards are well matched to pupils' needs, have injected greater ambition, and enable pupils to make strong progress. Actions are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- Recently appointed heads of faculty are a developing force within the school. They are a committed group who are successfully driving teaching and learning forward. Together with senior leaders, they evaluate pupils' progress on a regular basis and take timely action when pupils are found to be falling behind. Pastoral leaders support pupils' social and emotional development effectively, as well as keeping a close eye on pupils' academic progress.
- Leaders have worked hard to build community confidence in the school, and parental engagement is growing. Collaborative work with partner primary schools, such as offering Japanese lessons to the most able pupils, is paying dividends. As a result, increasing numbers of parents are choosing the school for their sons and daughters.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, have a positive view of the school. One parent said that the school: 'Gives individual attention to children, creating a safe, supportive and stimulating environment. Staff really know their pupils and bring out the best in them, whatever their background or ability.'
- Teachers, many of whom teach outside their specialist area of expertise, are enthusiastic, dedicated and strongly supportive of the school. They recognise the significant changes that have been brought about and are proud to be a part of the school's improvement. They value the professional development opportunities they receive, especially to support their teaching in subjects new to them.
- Newly qualified teachers appreciate the support that leaders provide. They are developing the skills and knowledge required to be increasingly effective practitioners. Joint training opportunities with other schools in the trust are helping staff to share good practice.
- The school's membership of EAT has been a significant factor in its continuing improvement. Against a backdrop of recent turbulence in staffing, especially in science, the trust has been able to offer additional personnel to support school leaders. More broadly, the trust has plans to add permanent extra staff, so that unexpected staffing issues do not affect this small school negatively in the future.
- Leaders review the curriculum on a regular basis. Pupils follow one of three pathways, which is best suited to their needs. For example, the 'aspire' group has opportunities to study two languages and the separate sciences, and the 'discover' group receives extra support with literacy and numeracy. Over time, these curriculum changes have resulted

in pupils aiming higher and with greater numbers fulfilling their potential.

- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities covering sports and the arts, together with more unusual experiences such as journalism club. Many pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. A variety of trips and visits enable pupils to gain a broader understanding of life in modern Britain and beyond.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding for a variety of well-targeted interventions for disadvantaged pupils. These include literacy and numeracy development, academic mentoring, and enrichment trips. Such activities are helping to raise disadvantaged pupils' aspirations and enable more of them to make strong progress.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, teaching assistants support targeted pupils well with their classwork.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to offer pupils extra help with their English and mathematics. The funding supports a specialist literacy and numeracy teacher, a dedicated librarian and a specialist reading programme, as well as a homework club. As a result, the majority of pupils make great strides forward in their learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors on the local governing board have a wide range of professional skills and experience. Some have a long-standing association with the school and some also sit on the board of trustees. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and are realistic about where the school needs to improve.
- Governors receive ongoing training from school and trust staff. They are frequent visitors to the school and support and challenge senior leaders in their work.
- Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. For example, a designated governor has oversight of safeguarding, and systematically shares information with the wider governing board.
- Governors understand the role the school plays in the local community and are committed to ensuring that the community is served by an inclusive and increasingly effective school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of this area of the school's work is highly effective in creating a culture of safeguarding within the school. Robust systems and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff know their pupils very well, and regular training ensures that their expertise is kept up to date.
- Administrative systems and record-keeping are thorough and methodical. Leaders liaise very effectively with outside agencies and are relentless in their pursuit of external help for pupils who need it.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. While some said that bullying sometimes occurs,

they know who to go to if they need support and are confident that staff will deal with it. The assembly and tutor programme is very effective in teaching pupils how to protect themselves from harm. For example, Year 8 pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to recognise control and manipulation.

- Parents who responded to the Ofsted survey agreed that their children feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good teaching is effective across a broad range of subjects, such as English, mathematics, history, geography and physical education. In these subjects, teachers use questioning skilfully to stimulate debate, and to encourage pupils to think hard. For example, in a Year 10 English poetry lesson, pupils were considering how the poet used the word 'shatter' in the context of a broken relationship.
- Teachers often teach across more than one subject area. Their subject knowledge in their specialist fields is strong. Inspectors saw evidence that training in their non-specialist areas is having significant impact on helping teachers to plan lessons to stimulate and challenge pupils in their learning.
- Lessons are generally pitched at the correct level to help pupils make good progress. For example, high-ability pupils in a Year 8 history class could confidently demonstrate their in-depth knowledge and understanding of Hitler's rise to power.
- Teachers routinely expect pupils to recall previously learned knowledge and to demonstrate their deeper understanding of topics studied. As a result, pupils can demonstrate that they know more, and can do more, over time.
- Pupils' books show that the school's feedback policy is being used effectively. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to reflect on teachers' advice to improve their work and act on it.
- Pupils say that homework is set regularly. The homework club enables pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, to access support to complete it.
- In the main, there are strong relationships in lessons, and embedded routines. Pupils are keen to learn, and collaborate well with each other. Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve.
- Where teaching is weaker, for example in science, expectations of pupils are sometimes too low. On these occasions, some pupils lose interest and do not develop a secure understanding of key concepts or skills.
- While inspectors saw strong evidence of the development of pupils' written and spoken skills in some lessons, in others there were fewer opportunities for pupils to express their ideas or to write at length. Consequently, pupils', especially boys', literacy skills, are not being developed sufficiently well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pastoral support for pupils is a strength of the school. Staff have in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs and offer timely advice and guidance where pupils need it. Several parents who responded to the questionnaire commented on the school's effectiveness in this area. One parent said: 'Pastoral and general care for the children's well-being is second to none and the school is very good at building resilience and independence'.
- The school's provision for personal, social, health and economic education is effective. Pupils receive age-appropriate input through a well-thought-out programme of assemblies and tutor-time activities. For example, during the inspection, Year 8 pupils were encouraged to think about their digital resilience and how to keep themselves safe online.
- Teachers encourage pupils to consider aspects of living in modern Britain. For example, during the inspection, pupils reflected in assembly on the meaning of freedom in the wider context of human rights.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Low-level disruption, typically when teaching is weaker, sometimes gets in the way of learning. While staff are enforcing the behaviour policy more rigidly this year, which is leading to better quality learning overall, the number of exclusions is still too high.
- Pupils' attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, is below the national average. Leaders are working hard to ensure that pupils attend school, and some of their strategies are bearing fruit. However, leaders do not as yet evaluate the effectiveness of the actions they take sufficiently sharply to make sure they are focusing on the actions that work best.
- Pupils and staff report that behaviour has improved notably over time. Most pupils behave well around the school site, particularly when teachers are there to supervise. Pupils enjoy being at school and are smartly dressed. They are respectful of the school building and keep it tidy and free of litter. In this small school, pupils form strong relationships across year groups and clearly enjoy each other's company and the close-knit community atmosphere.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress since the academy opened, in September 2016, has risen steadily. The academy's published examination results in 2018 showed that pupils' attainment and progress were in line with the national average. Despite previous instability in staffing, and a legacy of weaker teaching in the past, the positive effect of higher aspirations and stronger teaching over time was evident in these results.
- GCSE results show that pupils make good or better progress from their starting points in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and languages, as well as several

other subjects. Results in English and mathematics were particularly strong, reflecting school leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching in these areas.

- Inspection evidence, supported by the school's own assessment of pupils' learning, shows that pupils currently in the school are continuing to make good progress in most subjects. However, some pockets of weak teaching remain, notably in combined science, which is affecting the progress pupils make.
- The most able pupils are benefiting from a more ambitious curriculum and teachers' higher expectations of what they can do and achieve. They are responding well to this challenge, and their books show high-quality work over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils are a particular focus of the school. Staff know who they are and keep a close eye on the progress they make. This, together with leaders' sensible use of pupil premium funding, is securing incremental improvements to the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported in their learning. Their tailored provision, combined with effective leadership, is meeting pupils' needs successfully. Learning-support assistants' focused support is a key factor in helping pupils with SEND to make the progress they should.
- Pupils in the lower years read widely and often, due to timetabled reading lessons. In addition, the weekly 'drop everything and read' session for all pupils during tutor time is very effective. The well-stocked library is a popular place for pupils to visit. Staff encourage pupils to read by advertising the books they are themselves reading on their classroom doors. However, the impact of reading on the development of boys' literacy skills is yet to be fully felt.
- Careers education and guidance is a strength of the school. Pupils from Year 7 onwards benefit from a range of activities. For example, Years 8 and 9 pupils undertake work shadowing, Year 10 pupils do a week's work experience, and a number of external business mentors guide and support pupils in their choices. A careers adviser provides impartial advice. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	142822
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10102017

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Clive Rothwell
Principal	Alan Henderson
Telephone number	01488 682 400
Website	www.johnogauntschool.co.uk
Email address	jogoffice@excalibur.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school was opened as a new academy in October 2016, when it joined the Excalibur Schools Trust. A governing body provides local oversight of the academy and reports to a board of trustees.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a proportion of minority ethnic groups slightly below the national average
- The number of pupils with SEND is well above average.
- Around a fifth of pupils are disadvantaged and are supported through the pupil premium.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils away from the school's site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 32 lessons, most of them visited jointly with senior leaders. At the time of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were sitting examinations, so no learning was observed in this year group. Inspectors also visited form time and assemblies.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors looked at work in pupils' books. Inspectors also examined a selection of pupils' books in key stages 3 and 4, with school leaders, to give a broader picture of progress over time.
- Inspectors held regular meetings with senior leaders and with a range of staff, including newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. Inspectors also spoke informally to many staff.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, the chief executive officer of EAT and the executive principal designate of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the written comments submitted by 55 parents. There were 33 responses to the staff questionnaire and 85 responses to the pupil questionnaire. Pupils' views were also gathered through meetings with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 10.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school information. This included the school's evaluation of its performance, the school's plan for improvement, information about standards and progress, the school's website, and logs about behaviour and attendance, as well as a range of policies.

Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Kearsey	Ofsted Inspector
Harry Kutty	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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