

Inspection of John O'Gaunt School

Priory Road, Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 0AN

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Richard Hawthorne. This school is part of Excalibur Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Nick Lewis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Toby Watson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils like attending John O'Gaunt School. Staff take the time to get to know pupils to identify what each pupil needs to succeed. Form tutors play an important role in this. Staff care about pupils' well-being and pupils value the support they are given. Pupils say that they know the school has their best interests at heart. This is exemplified by one pupil, who told inspectors, 'The school feels like family.'

Despite the school's high ambition, pupils do not always learn enough to ensure that they can achieve well. The school recognises this and is in the process of making positive changes to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils recognise and appreciate that lessons are now more enjoyable and engaging. They are increasingly rising to meet the school's ambition for their learning and achievement.

Pupils understand the school's values of 'ambition, care and courage' and use these to judge their own actions and attitudes. They are respectful of each other and know who to talk to should they have any concerns. Pupils appreciate the school's effective pastoral support and their opportunities to have a say in their education. The Student Leadership Group is valued by pupils because they see the difference it makes and how their voice is heard.

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

The school recognises that pupils' outcomes in national tests, such as GCSEs, have been too low. As a result, too many pupils are not being prepared well enough for their next steps in education, training or employment. The school's ongoing focus on improving outcomes is, however, beginning to have an initial positive impact and leaders are eager to build upon this.

The school has recently renewed its curriculum. The knowledge that pupils need to learn is now precisely sequenced and pupils are beginning to build their knowledge and skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive additional help from staff. The school's wide-ranging support ensures that pupils with SEND receive the precise support that they need to learn.

However, in some lessons, the expectations of what pupils can achieve remains too low. Too often, the learning activities do not deepen pupils' understanding sufficiently. In addition, pupils do not always have opportunities to develop their ability to write about the different subjects they study. As a result, pupils are not consistently developing their knowledge and understanding. The school recognises this and is implementing plans to address this variability.

The school has redeveloped the way that it checks pupils' learning. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are often identified by teachers, and many are addressed quickly. However, this is not consistent. Similarly, there is inconsistency in how well pupils are helped to improve after some formal assessments and examinations. As a result, some pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Supporting pupils to improve their literacy is a priority for the school. In lessons, key vocabulary is frequently emphasised. The school's library is welcoming and promotes reading well. However, the school does not check well enough whether pupils throughout the school need help to improve their ability to read. Pupils who would benefit from extra support are not consistently identified. Consequently, these pupils do not have the reading fluency they need to learn well.

The school's recent drive to improve behaviour has been very successful. Pupils understand the school's high expectations. In lessons, the school's systems help to ensure a consistent behaviour management approach. This results in calm learning environments. Should pupils find behaving well more difficult, they receive targeted support and are proud to improve.

The school has focused on identifying and removing any barriers to positive attendance. While many pupils do attend well, a significant minority have low attendance. The school recognises this and has robust processes in place to support attendance and to help families recognise the importance of coming to school regularly.

Pupils' wider development is carefully considered. Trips and visits are plentiful and contribute to developing pupils' life experiences. The school offers an impressive range of clubs and activities. Careers education is impactful, meaning pupils are well informed about their next steps.

Leaders are highly committed to the pupils at this school. They, alongside the trust, recognise the impact of some of the initial improvements that have been made. However, they recognise further work is needed to ensure pupils achieve as much as they should across the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The ongoing improvements being made to the teaching of the school's curriculum are not yet embedded. In addition, the school has not consistently checked the impact of this work closely enough. As a result, pupils are not learning and achieving as much as they could. The school must ensure that it continues to implement and monitor the improvements being made. This includes utilising the most helpful information to identify and act upon further development priorities.
- A significant minority of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. As a result, they are missing out on vital learning. The school must continue to use its robust attendance processes to support these pupils to improve their attendance.

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	142822
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10341804
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	444
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Toby Watson
CEO of the trust	Nick Lewis
Principal	Richard Hawthorne
Website	www.johnogauntschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average secondary school.
- The school's principal and other members of the senior leadership team have taken up their posts since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of Excalibur Academies Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the principal, the SEND coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors met with a representative of the chair of trustees, the CEO and other members of the governing body and trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, drama and French. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. The inspectors also visited lessons and looked at work samples from a range of other curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 puts pupils’ interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Jane Cartwright	Ofsted Inspector
Taj Bhambra	Ofsted Inspector

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