

7th September 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Reflecting on last week and at the end of our first two days back to school, I cannot say enough about how fantastic our students were and how incredible it was to hear the sounds of young people enjoying school again. It is all too easy to forget how much joy this brings. I wish each and every student a warm welcome back to full time education and we all hope that they have their best year yet!

Thank you for your support in getting your children to us looking smart, equipped and ready to learn. Whether they were joining us in Year 7 or returning to us in older year groups, having sent my own two children back to school last week, I know only too well the pleasure and stress this can lead to at home!

We had a busy week ourselves preparing for the new school year, with 2 staff Inset days spent working hard to get the school ready and safe to open to students. Having walked the school every day last week I am confident that we are in a strong place to start the year from. The school site has been well prepared for full reopening and the new routines that are required, as well as offering a stimulating and professional environment to work in. Having visited numerous lessons in the latter part of the week, the calm, purposeful and orderly atmosphere that I saw certainly bodes well for the rest of the school year.

We welcome several new staff to JOG this September, both teaching and support staff, and I would like to formally welcome them to the #JOGfamily and wish them and all our staff my very best for the year ahead. Our new staff are:

Mrs Andrews	Maths teacher
Mrs Atoyebi	Science teacher
Mrs Cadle	Minibus Driver
Mr Chisholm	Maths teacher
Miss Clarkson	English teacher
Miss Cox	Attendance officer
Mr Dziubinski	Computer Science teacher
Mrs Francis	Teaching Assistant
Mr Hammond	Head of Humanities
Miss Hunter	Cover Supervisor
Mr Kerry	Humanities teacher
Mr McKeivitt	Head of PE
Mrs Perez Luna	Head of Science
Mrs Quigley	Head of English
Ms Spearing-Ewyn	Science teacher
Mrs Tovey Cooke	SEND/CO
Mrs Wakeham-Thomas	Visual Arts teacher

During our Inset days, we spent some time reflecting on our priorities and how we would further improve the quality of education for our students and I wanted to share with you one key phrase that came from these discussions that I think really encapsulates our aspirations, and that is: "big school ambition, small school care". This means that at John O'Gaunt we want to offer the same broad curriculum, rich opportunities and high-quality teaching that you would and should expect of larger comprehensive schools, but with the community feel and close care and support that only a smaller school like ours can offer. I believe JOG therefore brings something unique to our area and this phrase will doubtless be heard numerous times in school in the coming months. We certainly have a strong foundation to start from, following the 'Good' Ofsted in June last year and the continuing work alongside Excalibur Academies Trust

to build on the strengths it identified. We have returned to school resolute that we will aim for nothing less than excellence in all that we do.

On the subject of returning to school, please can I offer a polite reminder about our uniform policy. This can be found on our website.¹ Uniform is very important to a community school. It enables young people to feel a sense of belonging and equity with their fellow students and helps create the professional environment needed in a place of education. Therefore, we will continue to insist that our students fully adhere to this policy and your ongoing support in this is both appreciated and vital. Whilst I am aware that some items of uniform were delayed in getting to our uniform shop, I am reliably informed that delivery issues have now been resolved. Our policy makes important reference to footwear, make-up, jewellery, piercings and avoiding extreme hair styles. I would particularly draw attention to issues around shoes as we have noticed that some shops have been advertising trainer-style footwear as suitable school shoes where they are clearly not. If in doubt about any of these, please contact your child's tutor in the first instance as this will save your child from any potential embarrassment or sanction.

I also wanted to clarify a couple of points about face coverings. At present, and as mentioned in our recent communications, we require students to wear a face covering whilst in school corridors and enclosed communal areas. This does not include classrooms or for other learning events (such as in the hall during an assembly) but unless exempt², does include at all other times. Staff will guide students about this in school. Students travelling on buses are required to wear a face covering for their whole journey to and from school. Students are not required to remove their face masks if they wish to keep them on and we understand that some students feel more comfortable wearing them throughout the day. However, any students asked to remove their mask for the purposes of identification will be required to do so. We would like the coverings to be tasteful and in keeping with the professional image our school uniform conveys, but there is not a formal design-code for these coverings.

Please do not be offended if one of my colleagues contacts you to discuss uniform or face coverings as this is what we have asked them to do.

Over Thursday and Friday last week, we gathered each year group together (socially distanced and in their bubble of course!) to talk to them about our expectations moving forwards. I thought it would be useful to give you a flavour of the key messages from this. Firstly, we explained to students what expectations we have of ourselves as a staff body; namely to deliver great lessons, offer great support and aim for excellence in everything we do, whatever our role in school. Staff at John O'Gaunt work extremely hard and the more I get to know them, the more admiration I have for their dedication and genuine care and concern for our students. However, our work is only part of the picture and we also spoke to students about what was expected of them, in terms of their conduct and effort. We reminded them that they are working in a professional environment and are expected to act accordingly. They were told that, simply put, their job was to do just 3 things: work hard, try their best and follow the rules. It is of course far more nuanced than this, but I believe that this mantra will help us all stay focussed on ensuring that we all do our bit to make sure that every single student at JOG achieves their personal best.

Of course, and as I've stated before, this also includes the help and support from home. So please do communicate with us and continue to work with us to support your children to progress and achieve excellent outcomes. Over the coming days there will no doubt be a number of communications about further important issues. Please keep your eye out for this information and check our website and Twitter feeds too.³

In the meantime, thank you again for your ongoing support and I wish you a fantastic week.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Hawthorne
Head of School

¹ The uniform policy can be found by navigating here:

http://upload.reactcdn.co.uk/johnogaunt/uploads/asset_file/3_352_uniform-policy-may18.pdf.

² For information about what defines a face covering, the definition of an exempt person and information about making and wearing a face covering please go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

³ Our Twitter handle is @jog_school