

3rd January 2023

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Start of term updates

Happy New Year and I hope that you and your family had a peaceful festive period and restful break. As we start the new school term, I wanted to share a few important updates with you.

Return to school and additional Inset Day

Over the next couple of days, staff will be busy undertaking important training in school, which covers important topics such as SEND, behaviour management and adaptive teaching strategies, as part of our efforts to continually improve the quality of education and care at JOG. Therefore, I wanted to offer a gentle reminder that there is an additional staff training day tomorrow, Wednesday 4th January 2023, and therefore, students will not be in school. Work will be set for students via Class Charts and labelled '4th Jan Work'. All students should return to learning on site on Thursday 5th January 2023 for an 8.45am start as per usual.

Back to school advice from UKHSA

Amid high levels of Flu, Covid-19 and Scarlet Fever, UKHSA has issued some advice for the return to school. Please see the [Back to school advice, 02 January 2023](#) for full details. There is no cause for alarm, but it seemed prudent to summarize the advice here.

To minimise the spread of infection:

- If your child is unwell and has a fever, they should stay home from school or nursery until they feel better and the fever has resolved.
- Continue with good hand hygiene
- Catch it, Bin it - catching coughs and sneezes in tissues then binning them
- The flu vaccination is still available for all eligible groups

Eligible children include:

- those aged 2 and 3 on 31 August 2022
- all primary school-aged children
- some secondary school-aged children
- [getting your child vaccinated against flu - NHS](#)

Conduct and uniform

As we start the new term, I wanted to ask for your support to ensure that students attend school in the full correct uniform, focussed on learning and to remind them of the importance of good behaviour. On the latter, at the start of the academic year, I shared some statistics with students during assemblies taken from some Ofsted research, which showed that up to an hour every day can be lost due to low-level disruption in classrooms. Of course, our role is to set clear boundaries, ensure that we offer the best learning and care, and have strategies in place to manage classrooms effectively.

Students following the uniform code is a part of good behaviour too. We have reviewed our uniform policy in line with government guidelines and in light of the current cost of living climate. We have slimmed down the number of branded items required (for example, we have removed the need for a jumper to be a JOG branded one) and made as many items as possible generic and therefore able to be purchased from a range of retailers. We also do offer some uniform through a second-hand shop, managed through the PSA. Details of this can be obtained by emailing jog.2ndhanduniform@gmail.com. Where there are issues in the short term, we continue to run our yellow and red pass system as long as students bring in a note from home. Otherwise, we believe that our uniform code is reasonable, fair and as affordable as possible and we do expect students to adhere to the policy fully.

When we have to expend energy on dealing with uniform issues and misbehaviour, this takes away from the core purpose of our work. The support of parents/carers in these areas is a vital part of ensuring students receive a high-quality education at JOG. Therefore, please can I ask that you take some time to talk to your children about these things and ensure they are supplied with the full correct uniform so that they can attend school smartly dressed and ready to learn. Thank you.

Updated policies

Given the points above, I wanted to draw your attention to three important school policies, which have been reviewed and were approved by Governors during the autumn term. The uniform and behaviour policies have been slightly amended and the policy regarding suspensions and exclusions is new, it simply formalises approaches we already take in line with government guidelines.

If you are reading this letter electronically, you can click on each of the links below, which should take you directly to each policy. Otherwise, all of them can be found by navigating to the relevant section on our website: <https://www.johnogauntschool.co.uk/about-jog/policies/>. Individual links are as follows:

- [Behaviour for Learning policy](#)
- [Uniform and Dress Code policy](#)
- [Suspension and permanent exclusion policy](#)

Staffing

As I mentioned in my letter at the end of last term, we have a few vacancies in school at present. Whilst JOG is a great school and part of a supportive and forward-thinking Trust, recruitment is very tricky at present and a national issue for schools. Whilst we are working internally and alongside the Excalibur HR team, as well as with a number of recruitment agencies to fill the vacant posts, we have been able to make some contingencies in school to help cover some areas but have to focus these resources mostly at KS4 for obvious reasons.

Mrs Stone will therefore continue work with students in DT, assisted from time-to-time by staff from St. John's Marlborough and an external DT Consultant. In Maths, Miss Harris has agreed to teach some KS4 lessons in the short-term. Mrs Thorp will take on KS3 Maths and some KS3 Science, supported by a maths specialist from our Trust who is providing help with lesson planning. Both colleagues will work alongside Mr Eifler and Mr Milton who will also support some of the groups. I am grateful to these members of staff and indeed the whole staff body for continuing to work so hard for JOG students, but this is obviously far from the ideal situation. Parents and carers can help by spreading the good word about the school and sharing any communications you see about vacancies (such as on Twitter for example) and I will of course keep you updated too.

Looking ahead

I hope that you enjoyed reading some of the highlights of the year so far, that I included in my letter at the end of last term. The coming term is going to be just as busy for both students and staff.

Our Year 11 students will be working towards their next set of GCSE Mocks, with details of these to follow soon. Of course, this is all part of the ongoing preparations for their formal exams in the summer and there will be a programme of intervention and revision sessions that we will publish in due course too. In February, there will be a second Parents' Consultation Evening for Year 11s as part of our plans. Year 10 also have a Parents' Evening coming up in February and by then they will be almost a quarter of the way through their KS4 learning, so there will no doubt be plenty to discuss, and we hope to see as many parents and carers as possible in attendance at both of these events.

Students in KS3 also have an important term ahead of them. Students in Year 8 and 9 will be undertaking formal assessments in the coming weeks, as part of our ongoing work to find out where there might be learning gaps and react to these accordingly. Year 9s will be embarking on the important process for choosing which subjects they want to study during KS4. For Year 9, in addition to a Parents' Evening we will also be sending details of the separate Options Information Evening in due course too. We will also be undertaking our next stage of NGRT/NGST assessments to determine individual reading and spelling ages for all students in KS3 over the next 2 months, which will help us plan further support at a classroom and individual level as well as continuing to teach, assess and feedback to all students.

Parents of students in all year groups will also receive more information about their progress during this term and there are a number of other in-school activities to keep us all busy, such as World Book Day, charity days, careers events, fixtures, House competitions and our annual Prize Giving evening to name just a few!

Staff will be continuing to work on developing the quality of education and in addition to the aforementioned work during our January training days, we have a number of after-school meetings and training sessions coming up covering issues such as assessment, challenge and literacy as well as forthcoming whole-school reviews of SEND, Safeguarding and teaching and learning with the help of the Excalibur School Improvement team. I would also like to hold a 'Parents' Forum' and offer you the opportunity to come and hear from us and give your views on some important topics in school. Details of this will follow soon.

As you can see, there is as always plenty going on at JOG and Christmas will quickly seem like a distant memory I'm sure! If you have any queries about upcoming events, or anything else then please do contact the school. Otherwise, please keep an eye out on Weduc and the school website for further communications and I will also write to you again soon.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the last day of the holiday and we look forward to welcoming your children back to school on Thursday.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R Hawthorne
Head of School