

AMBITION - CARE - COURAGE

21 July 2026

Dear parents/carers,

Re: End of year updates

As we approach the end of this academic year, I thought it was a good time to update you on a few key things. I also enclose the latest 'JOG News' recognising and celebrating some of the things that have been happening at John O'Gaunt.

Staffing

This is the time of year that we have to say goodbye to some colleagues and welcome some others to JOG. Whilst recruitment and retention remain extremely challenging across the profession, we are fortunate in that staffing at JOG is generally stable once again this year and we are fully staffed for September.

We will be saying goodbye to Miss Braine in science, Mrs Griffiths as Faculty Lead of English and Performing Arts, Mr Roche from humanities, Mr Evans from the senior team, Mr Banks from languages and Mr Higgins from PE and our pastoral leadership team. From our TA team, we're also saying farewell to Miss Archer, Miss Drew and Mrs Ford.

We've had a successful recruitment period however, and therefore in September we will welcome Ms Collard as our MFL subject Lead, Mr Graham to the Humanities Team, Mrs Walecki to the PE Team and also as a Head of House and Mrs Turner will be joining the English Team. Joining our support staff teams will be Mrs Gandhi as a Cover Supervisor alongside Mrs Luxford and Mrs Malyszek who will join the SEND Team as Teaching Assistants

We've also made some internal promotions. Miss O'Brien was recently promoted to Head of House and Mrs Reardon was promoted Head of Faculty for English and Performing Arts. Mrs Barnett has been promoted to the position of Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

We are really pleased with the strong appointments that we've made, and the skilled colleagues named above join a dedicated and highly effective staff body. I hope you will join me in offering congratulations to all of them and wish them the best of luck for the forthcoming year.

For those leaving, I am sure that I speak for all of us when sending them off with heavy hearts but also our very best wishes for the future.

Start of Term 1 and key dates

The new academic year for students starts on Thursday 3rd September 2026. However, we are operating a staggered start to the term, so please do carefully read the outline of the arrangements below.

Tuesday 1st September and Wednesday 2nd September:

- Staff Inset Days – **School site closed to students** on both days.

Thursday 3rd September:

- **Only Year 7 students will be required to attend the school site.**
- The day will be slightly different to a normal school day and focus on team-building and inducting students to the school.
- Year 7 students should arrive for an 8.45am start and make their way to the main hall, the day will finish at 3:10pm – these are the usual timings for JOG.
- Year 7 students should bring their PE kit and trainers with them for this day.
- Year 7 students should also bring in their 'best' piece of written work from Year 6. Please ensure it is named.
- Year 7 students should either bring a packed lunch with them or a small amount of money to purchase items from the canteen as we will not have issued them with a cashless catering card yet. Students eligible for Free School meals will have their lunch provided from the canteen.
- For those who use it, school transport will run as normal

Friday 4th September:

This is a normal school day. Therefore, **all students** are asked to report to school for the usual start time of 8.45am.

- All students will spend a short time with their Tutor to receive important information, and they will be in normal lessons from Period 2 onwards. The school day will end at the usual time of 3.10pm.
- Our normal Autumn uniform rules apply (i.e. not PE kit). Please ensure that your child fully adheres to our policy as detailed below.
- For those who use it, school transport will run as normal.

Key dates for Term 1

- Week commencing 7th September – Year 10 mocks begin (these replace the cancelled mocks from the summer term due to school closure).
- Week commencing 7th September – Year 7 baseline assessments begin.
- Thursday 10th September - Year 7 'Meet your child's Tutor' evening
- Friday 11th September – Year 11 Careers Interviews commence. Your child will be informed when they have their appointment during terms 1 and 2.
- Tuesday 15th September – Reading Support Evening for invited parents.
- Wednesday 16th September – SEND Information Evening.
- Thursday 17th September – Welcome to Year 11 parents' evening.
- Thursday 24th September – Blood Brothers trip.
- Thursday 1st October – Welcome to Year 10 Evening.
- Week commencing 5th October – Key Stage 3 assessments (in class) begin.
- Thursday 8th October – Open Evening; early finish for students.
- Thursday 15th October – Post-16 Evening.
- Thursday 22nd October – last day of term; normal school timings.

Uniform

A copy of our uniform policy can be found here: <https://johnogaunt.excalibur.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/JOG-Behaviour-for-Learning-2025-26.pdf> and there will be an updated version released in September 2026, reflecting changes to the use of mobiles (see below).

We have not made any other major changes to the uniform code, and we appreciate your continued support on this issue. A couple of points we wanted to highlight are:

- **Footwear** - must be all black including the sole and no visible logo/tags etc.
- **Trousers** - tailored and full length (not flared), must not be leisure or active wear.
- **Nose piercings** - a clear retainer for the school day no bigger than 0.8mm will be permitted. As with other jewellery, this might need to be removed during active lessons (e.g. PE) for health and safety reasons.
- **Nails** – extensions or unnatural colours are not permitted and must be removed before the start of term.
- **Hair** – must be a natural colour and not extreme in style. Please ensure your child's hair aligns to the policy in time for the first day back.
- **Mobile phones** - these must be always switched off and in a bag during the school day. We will be meeting with students on their return to inform them of the changes that will happen from next year. This will also be communicated to parent/carers. You should know that when a student is seen with a mobile a parent/carer will be required to collect on the 1st occasion and repeat infractions will mean the phone has to be handed in every day.

Any student who does not follow our uniform code can be removed from circulation and placed in our Reflection Room or even sent home until any issues have been rectified. Repeated breaches of the uniform policy will be sanctioned. Please ensure that you help your child make a positive start to the academic year; by ensuring they have all the items of uniform that they need and present appropriately in accordance with our policies. Thank you for your support in this matter.

If you are aware of a uniform issue that affects your child, we ask that you contact the school, and we may then be able to issue a temporary uniform pass depending on the circumstances.

Pastoral System

We are returning to three Heads of House next year, as set out below:

- **Attenborough House** – Miss O'Brien
- **Seacole House** – Mrs Walecki
- **Turing House** – Miss Ford

Below is an overview of the tutors for the next academic year:

Attenborough	Turing	Seacole
Year 7 Miss Collard	Year 7 Mr Graham	Year 7 Mrs Reardon
Year 8 Mrs Turner	Year 8 Mrs Waddell	Year 8 Mr McKevitt
Year 9 Mr Eifler	Year 9 Mrs Melvin-Chick	Year 9 Mrs Hughes
Year 10 Miss Staten and Mrs White	Year 10 Ms Wills	Year 10 Miss Terry
Year 11 Miss Adams	Year 11 Mrs Smith	Year 11 Mrs Biggs

Main Hall

As you may be aware, our Main Hall has been out of action for the last couple of weeks. This is due to an issue with the ceiling for which we are seeking urgent repairs. The building and the surrounding areas are perfectly safe, but some significant repairs are required to the ceiling before we can open the Main Hall area again. We are hopeful that this will happen over the summer break, but this will depend on whether we can secure contractors at short notice. We are working on alternative arrangements if repairs take longer and will communicate these to you and our students accordingly.

Contact during the summer holidays

Over the summer holidays we have a lot of other work going on in school to maintain and improve the school site as a whole. This means that there will be one or two site staff in school, but the school reception, switchboard and emails are not manned daily. Emails to the jogoffice@excalibur.org.uk address will only be checked occasionally, therefore please be patient with us if waiting for a response.

For urgent safeguarding concerns during this period, please contact the Child Assessment and Advice Service (CAAS) during office hours (8:30am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday, and 8:30am to 4:30pm on Friday) using the details below:

- **Telephone:** 01635 503090
- **Email:** child@westberks.gov.uk

If you have concerns outside of office hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Service on 01344 351 999, where you can discuss your concerns with a social worker.

Newsletter

As I mentioned above, our final 'JOG News' is attached to this letter and I do hope you'll enjoy reading these highlights of a busy but pleasing year as much as the staff do in providing these opportunities.

Thank you

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support for John O'Gaunt. Schools can only achieve great things if parents and carers work in partnership with us and, as I've said many times before, the deciding factor in the success of any child is always the support they receive from home. Therefore, on behalf of all the staff here at JOG, thank you for supporting the school and your children.

Finally, it just remains for me to wish you and your family an enjoyable, relaxing and safe summer holiday. We very much look forward to seeing you and your children when we return in the new academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Mr R Hawthorne
Principal