Equa Mead attendance and absence policy appendix 2026 The John of Gaunt School

Moments matter, Attendance counts.

The John of Gaunt School, in line with the Equa Mead's attendance and absence policy https://www.equamead.org/Policies/ , supports the DFE guidance https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf to engage all young people attending our school to have excellent attendance and punctuality.



Celebrating success

Each calendar year has around 190 days where school is open and students can access their education on site. This means that there are approximately 175 days across the calendar year where students are not expected in school. These 175 days are made up of weekends, school holidays and bank holidays.

Excellent attendance is, therefore, where a pupil is in school for 98% or more of the days that the school is open. This means that throughout the year there is less than 5 days (one full school week) absent from school. Good attendance is between 95% to 97.9% and this means that a child will have been absent for less than 10 days (two school weeks). You are able to track this attendance through the school's app.

Excellent and good attendance is celebrated and rewarded through our behaviour for learning policies. We regularly recognise through certification, celebration assemblies and rewards points.

In addition, we recognise the more modern challenges of school attendance and therefor use rewards to improve attendance where patterns of challenge to attendance have been established.

Finally, we run a raffle for students who either have excellent attendance or who have worked to improve their attendance as part of an intervention group.

Supporting attendance through challenging times

We do recognise that there are some circumstances where a child will be too unwell to attend school.
If your child is not attending school the absence line or Arbor should be used to let school know. Ideally this should be before school starts at 08:35. (Please see step by step instructions in the
The absence phone line 01225 762637 and absence@jog.equamead.org continue to be available.

We are strengthening our attendance procedures and making it easier for you to report your child's absence.

We ask that absence notifications are submitted **via Arbor using the parent portal app or website/desktop version**.

This method ensures absences are recorded accurately and reaches our attendance team as quickly as possible.

How to report an absence in Arbor

1. Sign into **Arbor**
2. On the home screen, select **Quick Actions**, then **Attendance**.
3. Tap the **green "Log Absence"** button.
4. Enter the absence details, including the reason and the start and end time.
    - (You can adjust times for part-day absences.)
5. Select **Log Absence** to submit your request.

Please use this system for all same-day absences such as illness. Please note that reporting an absence does not automatically mean it will be authorised.

If you as a parent or carer is unsure if you child is well enough to attend please do contact our attendance team who will gladly discuss possible options to support our young people including:

- Onsite medical first aid
- Access to medication and personal products
- Student development contacts and mental health support
- EBSA support and access to our learning bridge

If the school attendance team feels that the reason stated is in line with the NHS guidance https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/ and the child's attendance patterns suggest low prior absence the register will reflect this. If there is a growing concern (more than three days absent in the last 10 weeks) then we will record this accordingly and begin to offer support and guidance from school.

- If you feel that there is a repeated pattern of absence, you can book a SAM meeting with our attendance team: Parent/Carer SAMS Booking Form – Fill out form
- If you feel that absence is due to special education needs we recommend looking at the following website: https://www.cuckfieldmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/2025/01/24/right-to-choose-asdadhd-assessment-pathways/
- If you feel that the absences are due to a need for mental health support we recommend looking at the following website: https://www.onyourmind.org.uk/
- If there are concerns over mild illness please use https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-68139870 and https://www.nhs.uk/nhsservices/pharmacies/how-pharmacies-can-help/ to support medical needs.

How will my child's absence be coded? The DFE released an update to section 444 of the education act in 2024 which changed the coding for registers.

If your child is attending school they will be receiving a present (/) mark. There are two legal registration marks each day and they must be open for 30 mins.

If your child has an illness that prevents them from attending school they will receive an illness (I) code. It is within the rights of the school to input these marks and will make the decision to do so based on the information that you provide the school with. Any un authorised marks will be recorded as such (O).

There are other coding options which, as a parent or carer you may wish to investigate: https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=8355aa1ef9dc53008227a33fbf0fac7acc98f88afaea4e6dd075c3e863256f77JmltdHM9MTc3MDU5NTIwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=3a2fcc07acef-6a43-314b-d861ad966bab&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ292LnVrL2dvdmVybm1lbnQvcHVibGljYXRpb25zL3dvcmtpbmctdG9nZXRoZXItdG8taW1wcm92ZS1zY2hvb2wtYXR0ZW5kYW5jZQ&ntb=1 Page 76.

What happens when my child's attendance drops below 95% (good attendance)?

As is our legal duty under section 444 of the education act, we will track the absence of each child within our school and offer support where we feel absence is impacting on a young person's right to a full education.

This comes in many forms;

- Tutor calls home for initial concerns, general wellbeing and check ins.
- Student development team support including core students with additional emotional needs.
- Access to a phased return to school.
- Attendance contracts
- Access to the learning bridge (fixed term EBSA or Medical needs).
- REP (reduced education provision - Medical evidences, SSENS referrals, clinician recommendation needed).
- School Attendance Meetings (SAM).
- Referral to outside agencies; CAMHS, MHST, EWO, mentoring, counselling etc.
- We, as a school, no longer support new flexi schooling applications.
- All absences on the first and the last three days of term will be unauthorised without medical evidence.

What is a SAM – School Attendance Meeting

We will always aim to support young people and their families in improving attendance so that each child is able to access their education. This may be held with the attendance team, student development team or other trusted school adult. You will be informed by post and or email to organise this formal meeting.

A SAM is a meeting with the school to discuss the barriers to good attendance and is a time to work collaboratively. We aim to hear from all parties; Child, school and guardians to ensure that positive practices and support are in place.

Initial concerns meeting: this is to discuss emerging patterns or areas of concern. If we feel that all parties are doing all they can to ensure good attendance a monitoring period will be put into place and we reserve the right to call a formal SAM if needed.

SAM 1 – this is a meeting to discuss direct concerns about levels of absence. We may request medical evidence of ongoing illness or referrals to outside agencies to support our understanding of the needs of the student.

We would expect that:
Children would be engaging with the support offered in school and abiding with our school behaviour policies in line with their reasonable adjustments.
Parents would be setting positive routines at home, speaking positively about the need for education and aspiration for the future. We would expect parents to ensure that school is the desirable place for the child to be i.e. removing consoles or entertainment sources.

School would be aware of and supporting additional needs or considerations with the resources within our gift to give in line with county and government guidelines.
School will likely not authorise any absence without medical evidence.

- Targets will be set for the young person
- Targets will be set for the parent or guardian
- Targets will be set for the school
- An attendance or punctuality agreement may be issued
- If there is any additional unauthorised absence a penalty warning may be issued.

After a school attendance meeting 1, a monitoring period of six weeks will be in place. If there are additional unauthorised absences a SAM 2 will be arranged. We reserve the right to call a meeting earlier if there are additional concerns or highly reduced attendance.

If patterns have significantly changed for the positive, a period of additional monitoring will take place as well as celebration of successes.

SAM 2 – this is a second formal meeting where we discuss the targets set out in the SAM 1 and the progress made on improving the attendance of the child / children.
Additional targets may be set.
If patterns have significantly changed for the positive, a period of additional monitoring will take place as well as celebration of successes.
If the pattern of attendance has not improved or has continued to decline, a referral to the local authority Education Welfare Service may be made.

What if I am requesting to take my child out of school?

Recreational holidays or visits are not authorised, in line with the DFE guidance. If you feel that there is a reason that a child should be permitted to have a leave of absence which meets the exceptional circumstances outlines by the government guidelines then please complete the form below or collect a form from reception.

REQUEST TO TAKE A CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME – Fill out form