



John Mason School
OPPORTUNITY | RESPECT | DETERMINATION

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

A guide for parents and carers

John Mason School

September 2026

Email: absence@johnmason.school (preferred option)
Phone: 01235 524664



Important notice: absence from school

Please let us know if your child is going to be absent from school as early as possible.

Email: absence@johnmason.school (preferred option)
Phone: 01235 524664

Every morning our team checks our registers and absence messages to check that every child has arrived safely to school or that we have a reason for absence.

If any children are not accounted for we instigate enquiries to ensure they are safe, starting with calls home.

We realise there can be a lot on in the morning, especially if your child is unwell.

However, we ask that you please make it a priority to inform us if your child is going to be absent from school for any reason. This allows us to rapidly ensure that every child is safe.

We'd like to thank all parents who help us to achieve this early in the school day by contacting us by 8.30am on the morning of absence.

Supporting Students' Attendance

At John Mason School we know that every family wants their child to feel happy, safe and successful at school. Attending regularly is one of the best ways to help young people build confidence, develop friendships and achieve their potential. We understand that there can sometimes be challenges that make attendance difficult, and we are committed to working alongside families to find solutions and provide support.

At John Mason School, success is achieved by **'being in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing'**. Excellent behaviour and attendance underpin this principle, allowing students to access the full benefits of a broad and balanced curriculum.

This will develop desirable habits and integrity. Prompt, full attendance will be a basic expectation for all students in their future careers, and excellent attendance will offer the best opportunity to ensure academic success.

We encourage good attendance through our termly achievement assemblies in which we recognise students who achieve high attendance rates, as well as students with the most improved attendance.

John Mason School has high aspirations for all students, and we know that the key to attainment is ensuring they maintain excellent levels of attendance

Why is high attendance important?

Good attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic success and positive wellbeing. Research consistently shows a clear link between attendance and educational outcomes. The UK Department for Education has found that students with higher attendance are significantly more likely to achieve strong GCSE results than those who miss more school. Even small improvements in attendance can have a positive impact on attainment, engagement and future opportunities. Regular attendance also supports social development, resilience and a sense of belonging within the school community, all of which contribute to students' overall wellbeing and long-term success.

For students, regular attendance is vital for them to experience the best of school and to maximise their opportunities. For example, nearly every lesson builds on previous learning, and regular attendance helps students develop knowledge, confidence and strong relationships with their teachers and peers. Missing school regularly can make it more difficult to keep up with learning, which may lead to gaps in knowledge, lower achievement and increased anxiety about returning to school.

Our aim is to work in partnership with students and families to promote excellent attendance, identify any barriers as early as possible, and provide the right support so that every young person has the best opportunity to thrive.

What does good attendance look like?

With around 175 non-school days a year available for holidays, trips or non-urgent appointments, our aspiration for all students is over 95% attendance each term. We encourage all students to aim for attendance of at least 95%. This allows for occasional illness while helping students benefit from as much learning, support and enrichment as possible. If students have, or seem to be on track for more than 9 days' absence in the course of a year we will be in touch to discuss attendance and offer support to help them achieve this target. However research by the Fisher Family Trust has shown measurable drops in GCSE outcomes if students fall below 98% attendance (more than 4 days off in the school year). So for every student, good attendance means that they are in school, on time, and in every lesson they can possibly manage, every day of the year that they are well enough to be in school.

Supporting students whose attendance is lower than expected.

If students fall below 90% attendance over the course of a school year this is a cause for concern.

Low attendance can have a significant impact on a student's academic progress, wellbeing and wider experience of school. Research suggests that, on average, this links to outcomes of one whole grade lower **per GCSE** for the student. Missing lessons can lead to gaps in knowledge and skills, making it increasingly difficult to keep up with the curriculum and causing students to feel overwhelmed when they return. The longer a student is absent, the harder it can feel to catch back up, which can further reduce confidence and motivation.

Low attendance can also affect **social connections and a student's sense of belonging**. Missing time with friends, tutors and teachers can weaken relationships and leave students feeling disconnected from school life. This sense of disconnection can contribute to **increased anxiety about returning**, particularly when students are worried about the work they have missed, social situations or how they will reintegrate. This can create a cycle in which absence makes returning feel more difficult, which in turn can lead to further absence.

This can have a considerable impact on their life chances beyond school - whether it is their choice of university, the level at which they can access an apprenticeship (and therefore get paid) and longer-term employment chances.

We want to do everything we can to support students and prevent them falling below 90% attendance and we know you will want to help them with this as well.

Supporting students to raise attendance.

In order to raise attendance it is important that we understand what the barriers are and work together to support students to improve their school attendance. Here are some ways that we can help students to raise their attendance.

Understanding the causes of low attendance

There can be many different reasons why a young person's attendance may become a concern, and these can vary from child to child and change over time. Difficulties may be related to physical or mental wellbeing, anxiety, friendships and social relationships, experiences in school, challenges with learning, family circumstances, routines such as sleep, or other pressures outside of school. Sometimes there may be a combination of factors, or a young person may find it difficult to explain exactly why attending school feels challenging. We recognise that attendance difficulties are rarely straightforward and that understanding the individual circumstances behind them is an important first step in providing the right support.

We also know that young people may not always share, or even recognise, the barriers to attendance themselves, sometimes presenting as 'unwell' when there is more going on.

Our first step when patterns of attendance start to cause concern is to speak to the young person and then yourself as parents about any possible causes in order to understand barriers. If you have concerns about your child's attendance please do get in touch with your child's tutor at the earliest possible opportunity. We are keen to meet with you, to discuss these and to think about practical ways we might support you and your child.

How you can help as parents and carers:

- **Talk to your child** openly about their attendance and ensure they understand that it was below target. Discuss absence with them to understand if there were days they could perhaps have made it to school and what the barriers were to attending.
- **Build healthy sleep habits** by establishing a regular bedtime and limiting screen use before bed.
- **Create a consistent morning routine** to reduce stress and help everyone leave the house on time.
- **Encourage a positive attitude towards school**, celebrating effort, achievements and good attendance.
- **Plan routine appointments**, such as dental or medical appointments, outside of school hours wherever possible.
- **Ensure your child arrives on time** each day, as lateness can be unsettling, make students more anxious about arriving to school and results in lost learning.
- **Help your child stay organised** by checking they have completed homework, packed their bag and have the correct equipment the night before.
- **Support resilience** by encouraging your child to attend school even if they are feeling reluctant, while recognising and discussing any underlying concerns. Discuss strategies for this over the summer and who you might communicate with at school if they are struggling so that they are prepared for this.
- **Seek support early** if attendance begins to decline—we are here to work with you and your child to overcome any barriers.

How we can help as a school:

We have strategies to support students who are struggling for a wide range of reasons that we know can make it more challenging to attend school. Common non-medical barriers to attendance that teenagers experience are:

- Worries about school, anxiety or low confidence. This can include anxiety about being behind after a period of absence.
- Friendships or social concerns, both in person and online.
- Difficulties with learning or keeping up with work.
- Organisation, routines or getting to school on time.
- Family circumstances that are affecting attendance.

We can support with these by:

- Ensuring team members are aware of the issues in school and ready to support the student and understand the challenges they are facing.
- Providing additional individual support and guidance from a suitable supportive person e.g. tutor or student progress manager.
- Meeting with you to develop a personalised strategy to support your child to make them happier at and less stressed by school, thus improving attendance.
- In some cases providing additional support within school e.g. counselling or signposting external agencies and support services if needed.

The most important thing is to help us understand what is going on and what the barriers to attendance are. We can then work together to help every student achieve their full potential.

Please get in touch **early and often** if there are issues that are preventing your child from attending school so that we can put some support in place. The best routes for contact are:

- 1) Your child's form tutor who can respond rapidly and address low-level concerns or raise issues with other individuals such as the year groups' Progress Leader or the SEND team as appropriate.
- 2) The Inclusion Team if your child is on the SEND register.
- 3) The attendance team at absence@johnmason.school who can provide specialised support or connect you to someone in school who can offer further help.

If you feel a meeting with someone from the school early in September would help get 2026-27 off to a strong start then please get in touch via absence@johnmason.school. Emails received over the summer will be responded to in our INSET days and we will set up a meeting with an appropriate member of staff to offer support early in the school year.

Further information

Thank you for everything you do to support your child's education. We know that strong attendance is achieved through a partnership between home and school. If you have any concerns, however small, please contact us. We would much rather talk early and work together than allow a



difficulty to become a bigger challenge. Every day in school matters, and together we can help every student thrive.

If you need further information about our policies and procedures please note that:

- We have given a little more information and the answers to some Frequently Asked Questions in the appendices to this document.
- You can find a copy of our full attendance policy on our website and statutory guidance published through the DfE website.

If you have any further questions or need support to help with your child's attendance please do email absence@johnmason.school in the first instance. Our attendance team will be happy to get in touch with you or to source suitable support from our behavioural, pastoral and inclusion teams.

Appendix 1: Attendance and Absence Procedures at John Mason School

Our Absence Monitoring Process

Absence is monitored by recording student's attendance at 2 'sessions' per day: AM and PM registration.

These records are used to identify students who may be at risk of 'Persistent Absence'.

A student is considered 'persistently absent' when their attendance is 90% or less across a school year.

Persistent Absence equates to 19+ days absence per year.

To protect our students from becoming at risk of Persistent Absence, our monitoring process covers all types of absence; however, we understand that every case is different so each student's circumstances will be carefully reviewed before action is considered.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Any student absences are designated as either authorised or unauthorised by the Headteacher. An unauthorised absence is when the school is unable to approve the reason the student is absent. An authorised absence is when the school has agreed to approve the reason the student is absent. If an absence is authorised, further action is only taken if other concerns have been identified. In authorising absence the school must follow strict guidelines produced by the DfE which can be found here: [Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#)

Examples of absences likely to be authorised:

- Being too ill to attend school. Please note: the school may ask for a medical note from your doctor if this is a frequent occurrence or your child is absent for more than three days.
- Medical and dental appointments. Please note usually only ½ day can be authorised in this circumstance.
- Taking part in licensed performances or sporting activities approved by the school.
- Official appointments not under your control. Examples could include external exam days or legal appointments.
- An exceptional circumstance, such as a family bereavement, family funeral.
- A planned, authorised absence in exceptional circumstances where permission has been sought from the Headteacher at least 2 weeks in advance.

Examples of absences likely to be unauthorised:

- Holidays.
- Attending a family event, concert, or sporting event not organised by the school or approved by the Headteacher as an exceptional circumstance.
- Being tired after an event or not sleeping well the night before.
- Moving house.
- Having to look after siblings or pets.
- Truanting.
- Pupils leaving school during the day without authorisation, or independently arranging to be collected from school. Please note it is of the utmost importance that any arrangements made for students to leave school during the school day are liaised through the school office, to confirm the pupil is always in the care of a responsible adult and to ensure safeguarding.

- If the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for absence and there is no supporting evidence.
- When there has been no contact from parents/carers following the school trying to make contact regarding unexplained absences.

Illness

At John Mason School we hold our duty of care to students of utmost importance. Whilst attendance is always very strongly encouraged to support your child's progress, children should not attend school if they are clearly too unwell, have a temperature, or have experienced vomiting or diarrhoea in the last 48 hours. Children attending school are expected to take part in all activities. If your child has an injury which affects their participation in P.E. or similar activity, please send them in to school with a note.

Please contact Student Services via the school's main contact details if you're unsure about return dates following infectious illness.

Pastoral Support

If there has been an incident that may affect your child's attendance, behaviour, or concentration, please contact the school so we can alert your child's teachers and the pastoral team to ensure they offer the right support. Please be assured the details can remain confidential.

Reporting Absence

Student Absence Line: [01235 524664](tel:01235 524664) or absence@johnmason.school

We do understand that on rare occasions, absence will be unavoidable.

If your child is unwell or cannot attend school due to an urgent appointment or other exceptional circumstance, please contact us on the student absence line above and leave a message.

Please leave us a message on the number above as soon as possible and before 10 am if your child is absent for any reason.

In the case of prolonged absence, please also contact your child's tutor.

If you've already informed your child's Tutor/Progress leader etc, please also call the Absence line to ensure the reason for absence is communicated to our Attendance officer.

If there are unexplained student absences, school will contact parents/carers by call, text or email. If we do not hear back from you this may be raised as a safeguarding concern.

Planned absences should be requested at least 2 weeks in advance.

Absence Emergency Contact Details

Please ensure that your contact details and child's medical details are always kept up to date so that we can easily contact parents/carers in an emergency. You can register updates with our Student Services office.

Appendix 2: Frequently asked questions

Will any type of absence trigger the monitoring process?

Our monitoring process is designed to be supportive from helping students catch up with missed work, to exploring barriers to attendance to providing interventions in order to help them attend school more regularly.

Any type of absence will be monitored including general illness. At the first stage you may receive a call from your child's tutor to discuss their absence, any support needs and to check that there are no barriers which may be impacting attendance beyond the causes they present overtly (E.g. "unwell"). We will, of course, take into consideration any specific circumstances that we are made aware of, such as underlying health conditions, hospital stays etc. before taking further action. The monitoring process allows us to maintain a dialogue with parents/carers. Good communication will help us to help you in maximising your child's attendance to improve their experience and outcomes at John Mason School. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact the school before you hear from us!

What happens if my child has a medical appointment?

We urge parents and carers to plan all non—urgent medical/dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is unavoidable, please ensure your child comes into school for the time before and/or after the appointment, so the impact on their attendance and learning is reduced.

Please note usually only a half-day's absence (or one 'session') can be authorised for medical appointments. If there is a reason why the child cannot attend any of the school day e.g. appointment times and travel please ensure you let us know this when you arrange the absence.

What if my child feels unwell at school?

If a child feels unwell during the school day, they should tell a member of staff, who will send them to a first aider to be assessed. If it is decided that the child is too unwell to be in school, parents will be contacted.

Students should not circumvent the process by phoning home themselves to ask a parent to collect them because they feel unwell; this could create a safeguarding concern. The school needs to speak directly with parents/carers to ensure students are released to an adult with parental responsibility. We politely request parents do not contact students via their mobile phones during school hours, but instead always use the main school office to make contact, so that staff are kept informed.

In the case of accidental injury, parents or carers will be notified as soon as possible.

What if there is an important event or holiday planned during term time?

In 2013, the Department for Education changed the regulations about term time holidays. In compliance with these regulations, requests for holidays during term time will no longer be authorised, and if a child is absent during term time for a holiday, the school may have to refer the case to Oxfordshire County Council who will consider issuing a fixed penalty notice.

A student may be authorised for absence only in exceptional circumstances, for example an approved sporting event or performance, or an exam. This must be authorised by the Headteacher in advance.

My child was just late, why has it been recorded as an absence?

The majority of our students take pride in good timekeeping, and they are encouraged towards this as a quality valued by future employers, with consequences for lateness as outlined below.

Students should arrive at school in time before the first bell at 08:30 and be present in class at the start of AM registration, which runs from 08:35 – 08:45.

If students arrive within 30 minutes of the start of school they will be marked in as “Late” and this will count as an attendance mark for that morning. If a child is regularly late to school we will contact you to discuss this further, in order to support them to arrive on time and ensure they are not missing learning.

However if a child arrives more than 30 minutes after the start of school we are not able to count this as an attendance and so it will be recorded as an absence against their morning’s attendance.



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JOHN MASON SCHOOL

Student absence line: absence@johnmason.school

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Wootton Road

Abingdon

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Phone: 01235 524664

Email: office@johnmason.school

Website: <https://www.johnmason.oxon.sch.uk/>