

September 2023

Dear Parent/Carers,

Our students have come back to us this year in truly GREAT style, they are looking smart and are clearly ready for the year ahead, we thank you for all your continued support in making this happen. Attendance so far has been GREAT; this really does reflect our purpose and values and indicates just how much our students have also enjoyed the very best start we have had as a school.

Great Academy Ashton places school attendance at the heart of everything we do. This term we will be launching our extremely popular **GAA Enrichment programme**, where a wealth of extra-curricular activities will be on offer for all our students. Watch this space.

Our **FREE breakfast club** is also now open. Students can arrive between 7.45am and 8.15am. Students must sign in at the Attendance entrance and all school rules apply including meticulous uniform and no energy drinks on our premises.

We want your continued support in ensuring your child attends to ensure they achieve the very best possible outcomes, enjoy the very best extracurricular activities not to mention social opportunities and interactions with their peers.

There is a clear correlation between excellent attendance and excellent progress. The real issue of student absence is the learning that is lost, with that in mind please consider the following:

- Holidays must not be taken in term time, unauthorised holidays may be subject to a Penalty notice (see legislation below).
- Where possible arrange medical appointments outside school hours, if this is not possible, please limit the amount of time missed and ensure your child returns to school.
- If your child is ill and cannot attend school, please contact our Attendance Team on **0161 241 9555** or email attendance@gaa.org.uk.
- **Please see link: Is my child too ill for school?**
[Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-should-i-worry-about-my-childs-absence/)
- Please also refer to our website for a range of support, from: Starting Secondary school, to Young Minds, Tameside School Nursing Service, to name a few.
(Scroll down to useful Links section using the link below.)

<https://gaa.greatacademies.co.uk/parents/attendance/>

Each student has an attendance target of 97%. This is to support students in their learning and to foster important skills and habits for their life beyond school, to help illustrate this:

- 1 day off per school year means attendance will reach 99.5% and 5 hours of lost learning.
- 10 days off per school year means attendance will only ever reach **94.7% and 45 hours of lost learning.**

- 20 days off school per year means attendance will only ever reach **89% which is 95 hours of learning** lost and is classed as persistently absent. (PA)
- Any student below **50%** is classified as **severely absent- this is 500 hours of learning lost per year**.

Penalty Notices for Non-School Attendance

This section of the letter is for **information only** and to ensure all our families are explicitly aware of the expectation towards school attendance and the implications of unsatisfactory school attendance.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in a 12 week period (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents may receive a Penalty Notice of £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. The Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the Notice being served. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution (a separate Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child).

In law, an offence is committed if a parent fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school. Tameside Education Welfare Service, in conjunction with schools and Greater Manchester Police, will use these powers as an early deterrent to prevent patterns of unauthorised absence developing.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice without a warning letter for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- Where the absence is recorded as an unauthorised leave of absence for a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) in a 12 week period

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also makes it an offence if a parent fails to ensure that their child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion. Penalty Notices may be issued for such an offence.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to issuing proceedings at court. As a proportionate response, the Local Authority is likely to give parents the opportunity to discharge their liability to criminal proceedings by way of a Penalty Notice on the first occasion.

Once a parent has discharged liability by paying a Penalty Notice on at least one occasion and where there are further unauthorised absences, they may not be given the option of paying a further Penalty Notice, but may instead be summoned to appear before Tameside Magistrate's Court to answer an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996: failure to ensure regular attendance. Conviction of an offence under section 444(1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444(1A), convictions may result in a fine of £2,500, a community order, electronic tagging or a custodial sentence and a criminal conviction recorded.

Parents and carers of pupils registered at this school are reminded that they hold legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.

Great Academy Ashton shares the Government's determination to raise levels of pupil attendance and achievement in order to ensure the best possible start in life for our children.

Support and guidance on attendance is always available from our school and if you have any specific queries in relation to this letter, please contact the Attendance Team on the above number.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Hartley', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr J Hartley
Assistant Principal
Attendance and Engagement