

19 December 2023

Dear Families

I hope that this letter finds you well and that you have a lovely Christmas break planned. As we come to the end of this 16-week term, I wanted to take an opportunity to reflect with you how amazing our students have been and how grateful I am for your continued support in encouraging your sons and daughters to “jump in with both feet” to academy life. This last term has seen the best attendance results GAA has ever seen. This time last year I was able to celebrate with you that we had achieved student attendance levels in the “Top 25% of all schools in the country”, this year our students have gone one step further...achieving the “Top 10%” award for attendance. Our students are in the top 10% of all schools in the country for their exceptional attendance. Thank you so much for your support and encouragement. I really do not underestimate your input in promoting positive school attendance.

Alongside this, our school has seen record admission numbers for September 2023 and even higher levels for September 2024. Again, September 2023 was the best admissions on record, and this is now predicted to be surpassed for September 2024 with over 480 applications for our 270 places. In the context of a 10% reduction in pupil numbers in the current Year 6 across Tameside, this is an exceptional achievement. With over 25 appeals for admission into our current Year 7 cohort this last term, we are fast becoming a school of choice within Tameside and Oldham.

This term has also seen our graduation as part of the Department for Education Pathfinder Programme – Behaviour Hub Status. Our work in developing our GREAT values at the heart of our engagement culture has been recognised nationally and the development of positive framing, learning modes, internal alternative provision, mental health and well-being services and inclusion has led to our best ever term on record for the least amount of behaviour related corrections and incidents. Each and every day, I stand in front of years 7 and 8 as part of our Morning Mood programme and encourage them to be the best possible version of themselves and they have certainly all achieved that.

#### End of Term Arrangements

School closes for the Christmas break on Thursday 21st December. We are not closing early on that day as all learning time is key at this time of year. We have an INSET day on Friday of this week and therefore closed to students. Thursday will be made up of normal lessons periods 1 to 4 and we will then come together as a school in our form groups for Christmas related activities period 5.

#### Start of Term Arrangements

When we return in January, we will have our traditional staggered return.

- Monday 8th January 2024; Years 9 and 11 only in school. Normal start time.
- Tuesday 9th January 2024; Years 7, 9 and 11 only in school. Normal start time.
- Wednesday 10th January 2024; all year groups in school. Normal start time.

The staggered return allows us to support transition back into learning and embed our high culture of engagement and expectations.

### General reminders for the start of the new term

All students must wear the academy blazer and tie, their shirt tucked into their skirt or trousers and be in black shoes. Footwear must look like a sensible Academy shoe and not be able to be mistaken for trainer. Shoes must be plain black only with no white or contrast piping. Please be aware some shops do sell black trainer type shoes within their school shoe section and this style of shoe is not permitted. As a rule, any footwear by Nike, Adidas and Converse are trainers and are not permitted to be worn in school.

When you are purchasing a school skirt, please ensure it is not made from Lycra and that the length of the skirt is at least at mid-thigh level. Any student wearing an incorrect skirt, either due to material or length, will be provided with an appropriate school skirt to wear. The academy jumper is optional for all students. Students are not permitted to wear any outside attire inside the academy building – this includes hoodies and non-academy jumpers. Ties can be purchased from our uniform suppliers, but we do have a limited number of ties in stock that can be purchased directly from school for £5.50. Each year group has a different colour stripe on their tie, and this moves through the years with them e.g. if your child is currently in year 7, they have a tie with a Red stripe and they will continue with this colour stripe until they leave in year 11. If you are experiencing any issues with acquiring uniform, please do contact the relevant year team who will be happy to support.

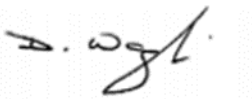
Due to health and safety limited jewellery is allowed to be worn by students. Students can wear one pair of stud earrings in the ear lobe only, a watch and Medicare bracelets only. A plain or clear nose stud is permitted – no body piercings of any other kind are permitted.

As we approach the school holidays some students may want to have false nails. This is up to families during holiday time but in school acrylic nails are not permitted for safety reasons. If a student is wearing acrylic nails, they will be placed in isolation until they are removed. Please bear this in mind in terms of time for this to be removed before the return to school in January.

Over the Christmas break, our Year 11 students have individual revision requirements for the week after New Year. This will allow them to make the best possible start to their final ever year here at GAA. The details of this will be messaged via Microsoft Teams, email, and text message. Please encourage your son or daughter to complete all the work as this has been specifically designed for their own individual learning needs.

All that is left is for me to wish everyone a lovely, peaceful, and family filled Christmas break. Thank you for your partnership, advocacy, and encouragement. GAA students are simply inspirational, and this is due to our continued working together for the betterment of their life chances.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Waugh', is written over a light blue rectangular grid background.

Mr David Waugh  
Principal