

29th January 2024

Dear Families,

I hope that you and your families had a lovely Christmas break. The Year 9 students have been back with us for approximately 2.5 weeks, so have completed almost 50% of their secondary school life here at GAA and are fast approaching the 'business-end' of their schooling.

Parent's Evening

During this Spring term, Year 9 students will have their parents evening on Thursday 7th March, before being guided through and choosing their GCSE options. It is absolutely essential you attend this parents evening, as students should be supported by parents to choose subjects that they like and/or think that they will enjoy. This combined with positive effort from themselves will give them the best possible chance of being successful in their GCSEs in two-years time. Your child needs to 'make it work' for themselves as they approach this very important next chapter in their life.

Compete or Completer?

Mr Waugh has led an assembly with the year group, briefly speaking to them about the academic choices they will make this term. A key message in his assembly was 'are you a competer or are you a completer?' Your child needs to 'compete' in the GCSE competition to ensure that they leave GAA with the best possible grades, because they will sit exam papers with the thousands of other children nationally who are the same age as them and they too will be competing for the higher grades. To further explain this to the students I showed them a video clip of Sir Dave Brailsford who was instrumental in the success of significantly improving British Cycling. The thinking behind it was to show them what they will need to do to be successful in their GCSEs. The key messages that were shared are:

- GCSEs may appear to be your 'top of a mountain' but you can achieve your goal by setting yourself mini targets as incremental steps help you gain.
- You need to create your own positive culture of continual learning, being supportive of one another and encouraging others.
- Emotions can hijack you i.e. energy spent worrying about results will hold you back as that energy is not usefully spent. Channel your energies into what you are doing in the 'now.'
- Take ownership of what you are doing, tackle areas of misunderstanding or misconceptions – ask teachers questions and get your answers.
- Look at what is in it for you... i.e. stepping stone to your next qualifications.
- To be successful... Be a 'doer' to get things done and succeed.

Independence

It is important that your child is encouraged to develop independent simple academic routines that are manageable and sustainable. These should be both in school and at home because learning is continual. Having their full equipment each day, including full uniform gives a positive start to each day and lesson so that their energy is spent focused on learning. Students also need a quiet place at home, combined with the allocated time to be able complete homework and independent work. It allows reflection and opportunity for their learning to embed. In KS4 there will be times where independent study is essential, with revision and coursework being really important. This needs to be actively encouraged, prior to them using their electronic devices, which many of them openly prefer.

Should you need to be in touch with myself or Mr Yeo please contact us via email using our email address goldpastoral@gaa.org.uk because this account is regularly checked throughout a working day. It also means that if one of the team is out of school, your message can be picked up by the other member of the team.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Susan Wrigley
Head of Year 9