

June 2024

Dear Parent/Carers

I hope that you and your families had a lovely Whitsun break. We are fast approaching the end of the third academic year of your child's journey at GAA and your child has now begun their next chapter – their GCSE journey. Their 'options' were chosen in April and I am very pleased to inform you that all Year 9 students have been fortunate enough to be able to study their first choices. Your child needs to begin to look very much towards their own future and what they would like to create for themselves. The success and happiness of a teenager's life will largely depend on choices that they choose to make.

Mr Waugh has led another assembly last half term with the year group, briefly speaking to them their futures and decisions they will make. The key message he reiterated to the year group is 'are you a competitor 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. They will sit exam papers with the more than 500 000 other children nationally who are the same age as them. They too will be competing for the higher grades. Mr Waugh has explicitly told the students that they need to aim for as many marks as they can to be in the top 70% of children nationally. This is where the exam boards allocate Grades 4 and above. Every mark will count towards your child's GCSE grades so it is crucial that your child aims to be in school every day. This will give them the best possible chance to obtain the subject knowledge and skills required for their GCSE papers in 2 years' time.

It is important that your child is forming independent simple academic routines that are manageable and sustainable. Learning is continual, happening both at school and in the home. Having their full equipment each day, including full uniform gives a positive start to each day and lesson so that their energy is channelled in to learning. Being properly prepared is an expectation of future employers. It needs to be every student's 'norm' to form the required habits for a successful future. Students need a quiet place at home, along with the allocated time to be able complete homework and independent work. It allows them reflection time, processing time and opportunity for their learning to embed. This needs to be actively encouraged prior to them using their electronic devices. Academic work needs to become your child's priority to enable them to set themselves up with qualifications that can put them on a future pathway they will want. It is easier for a person to keep up than catch up.

Each day the world is becoming more digitalised. It is important that we prepare the students for their lives beyond GAA, where most of their communication will be using digital platforms and/or emails.

This may be in the workplace or having to communicate with companies/businesses. At GAA staff and students use the Microsoft Teams platform for correspondence. Student timetables, information and homework set by subject teachers, and messages via their registration groups are communicated using this platform. Students need to be encouraged by school and parents/carers to check this platform each day in term-time so that they receive all the relevant information as their school lives become busier. It is the start of forming good habits building your child's confidence and independence - should they need to communicate with staff and/or find out information, they will have developed the skill set in preparation for when they embark on college. Regularly checking relevant platforms, portals and emails needs to be their 'norm.'

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 in term time. 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