

Summer End of Term Letter  
July 2024

Dear Families

I genuinely hope that this letter finds you and your family safe and well and very much looking forward to a summer break. 2023-24 has been an outstanding year for us here at GAA. Through your support and encouragement, our students have achieved the best results on record on every measure. 2023-24 has seen the best attendance rates ever with our students achieving above national, above the North-West and most significantly, placing us in the top 20% of all schools in the country. Alongside this, we have achieved the national Gold Award from Anchored Schools for our safeguarding and behaviour provision, the national quality mark for careers education, been voted as School of the Year for Citizenship and gained the Gold Award for Sports Games. As we head into the summer break, I continue to have appeals for families wanting to secure a place in our school. We had over 450 applications for our Year 7 September 2024 entry for the 270 places and at time of writing, we are receiving appeals for every year group. In an industry where recruitment for staff is hugely competitive, I am pleased to say that we are fully staffed for September with great teachers and support staff. We welcome new entrants to the profession through the highly prestigious Teach First Graduate Programme and established staff into roles such as Head of Modern Foreign Languages and Head of Music. With nearly 40% of our students now studying for the EBACC (English Baccalaureate) our curriculum continues to be a highly ambitious, academic broad provision.

However, the achievements of our students in their academic studies, attendance, behaviour and attitudes are equally matched in their achievements in our wider enriched curriculum. The GAA Talent Show this week was a huge success, alongside our National Arts Award Ceremony celebrating the amazing work our students have put into to achieving their Discover Arts Awards. The list is endless in regard to their amazing engagement and if you do not already follow us, please follow myself as Principal on twitter @GaaPrincipal and our whole school twitter platform @GAAshton\_news. Both platforms will give you a sense of sheer brilliance of our students.

A significant area that I would like to highlight this year has been our students' success in their reading and comprehension abilities. Following recent testing, on average our students have gained 24-months reading progress over the last 10-months of the academic year. This is a metamorphic rise and lays the foundations for their future GCSE success. The secret to examination success lies in the reading and comprehension abilities of our students. Reading lies at the heart of our school, their curriculum and their future success. In September, to further develop the progress we have made with embedding a reading for pleasure curriculum, your children will now have a dedicated reading session each afternoon on their timetable known as 'Reg and Read'; simply put, we take the register and we read. The benefits of reading for pleasure are well documented and rooted firmly in academic research. The 'Reg and Read' curriculum also serves to punctuate the school day with a pause; after the excitement of informal lunchtime activity aiding a smooth transition from social time to learning time. We will continue to update you through the year with our family letters and our whole school reading and literacy strategy will feature within these.

#### End of Term Arrangements

School closes for the summer break on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July. Students will have a slightly earlier finish and will be dismissed from 2.00pm onwards. Please note, school buses will not be in service at this time.

### Start of Term Arrangements

When we return in September, we will have our traditional staggered return as per the table below. The staggered return allows us to support transition back into learning and embed our high culture of engagement and expectations.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2024	Staff INSET Day; school closed for students
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2024	Staff INSET Day; school closed for students
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2024	Year 7 only in-school. Prompt 8.30am start.
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2024	Year 7 & 11 in-school only. Prompt 8.30am start.
Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> September 2024	All year groups in school. Prompt 8.30am start.

### New School Day Timing

Following our consultation with families in May-June, I can confirm the new timing of our school day:

<u>School Day</u>	<u>Timing</u>
Morning Gathering	8.30am – 8.32am
Morning Mood	8.32am – 8.40am
Form	8.40am – 8.50am
Period 1	8.50am – 9.50am
Period 2	9.50am – 10.50am
Break	10.50am – 11.10am
Period 3	11.10am – 12.10pm
Period 4	12.10pm – 1.10pm
Lunch	1.10pm – 1.45pm
Reg & Read	1.45pm – 2.05pm
Period 5	2.05pm – 3.05pm

This new school day places reading at the heart of the learning experience, it extends and increases the amount of learning our students will gain and supports our continued drive of embedding scholastic excellence. Please note, the school gates will close at 8.30am promptly and any students who arrive after 8.30am will be marked late and receive a same-day correction. All students must be through our main gates by 8.30am to be ready for a silent respectful entrance to Morning Mood at 8.32am. In order to support the extension to the school day we have secured additional after school clubs and activities, both whole school and within our inclusion E-Block facility. Details will be communicated in our letter in September.

### Changes to School Uniform

Following a consultation process with our students and approval by our governing body, from September onwards, the school skirt must be accompanied with black tights (minimum 60-denier thickness). There are no other changes to the school uniform. Simply put, if wearing a skirt our students must also wear black tights.

The wearing of our uniform is an important element of school life. It is an expectation that all students wear the correct uniform at all times. All students must wear:

- Academy blazer (GAA branded)
- Academy tie (GAA branded; please note year groups keep their respective coloured tie as they progress through the years)
- White shirt (tucked in)
- Skirt with black tights (minimum 60 denier)
- Trousers
- Black shoes

Footwear must be a sensible academy shoe and not be able to be mistaken for a 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 of thumb, any footwear by Nike, Adidas and Converse are trainers and not permitted to be worn in school.

When 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. If wearing a skirt, it must be accompanied by black tights. Any student not wearing the correct uniform will either be required to go home and change or will be provided with appropriate uniform from us in school.

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, however we do have a limited number of ties in stock that can be purchased directly from school. Students keep the same colour tie throughout their time with us in school, therefore the tie colours for 2024-25 are as follows:

<u>Year Group</u>	<u>Tie Colour</u>
Year 7	Purple
Year 8	Red
Year 9	Silver
Year 10	Yellow
Year 11	Green

Due to health and safety rules, only 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, however no body piercings of any other kind are permitted. As we approach the holidays, some students may want to have false nails. This is up to families during holiday time however in school acrylic nails are not permitted for safety reasons. If students arrive in school with such acrylics, they will be placed in our internal isolation space until they are removed. Please bear this in mind in terms of timing for these to be removed before returning to school in September.

The uniform rules detailed above read rather instructional and overbearing. However, uniform is a vital part of our school identity and significantly reduces incidents of bullying, inappropriate behaviours and unkind comments. By having a consistent approach to uniform, it ensures that all our students are equal in their appearance within our school community, and it eradicates the inappropriate social pressures that often come with teenage years.

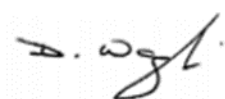
#### Summer Break

The summer break will see an upgrade to our whole school Wi-fi and building management system which will further improve the learning environment for our students and their faster access to on-line resources. I genuinely hope that you all have a lovely, peaceful and restful summer break, however I recognise that the extended break can cause challenges for some families experience personal traumas. Please be reminded of our support pages on our website and be aware of the following contact details, all of which are there to support families in times of personal crisis:

- Tameside Children's Social Care: 0161 342 410
- Oldham Children's Services: 0161 770 7777
- TOGMIND (Katherine St, A-U-L): 0161 330 9223
- NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Please may I encourage you to support your children to continue to read, discuss learning and help prepare them for their return. However, I also hope that you will find time as a family to fully switch off, recharge and relax. It has been a genuine privilege to be the Principal of your school this last year and witness the sheer brilliance and inspiration of our young people. I look forward to continuing to serve you and our community as we head into 2024-25. Wishing you all a happy, peaceful and family filled summer break.

Yours faithfully



Mr David Waugh  
Principal