

14<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Dear Parents/ Carers,

**Re: Attendance and Punctuality Expectations**

I hope this letter finds you and your family well as we venture into 2025!

We are writing this letter to inform and update you about attendance and punctuality to provide you with a clear outline about the absence procedures and the school and Tameside Local Authority responses to low pupil attendance. It is important for students at Great Academy Ashton to aim for their attendance to be above 95%, this is to enable the students to learn, make progress and thrive, giving them the best outcomes for the future. Research has shown that the students with higher attendance achieve better results at GCSE.

**School Attendance**

What is considered as poor attendance? Anything below 95% is weak, any students below 90% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE.

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 10-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. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 states that:

For the first offence committed, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

For the second offence committed the, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 with no option for the second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

There is a limit of 2 Penalty Notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period. If there is a third offence committed within this timeframe, another tool will be considered such as prosecution 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.

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 as detailed above. Please note the issuing of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to issuing proceedings at court.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice 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 10-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.

Parents/carers of pupils registered at this school are reminded that they hold legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Please note that a separate Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carer for each child as each parent/carer holds responsibility to ensure regular school attendance.

### **Reporting your child's absence**

- If your child is unable to attend school, you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 8:30am.
- Alternatively, you can email the attendance department at [attendance@gaa.org.uk](mailto:attendance@gaa.org.uk).
- If you do not supply us with this information, we have a duty of care to contact you so that we are sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure.

For any appointments, it is generally better if these can be arranged outside of school hours, but we understand that this is not always possible. Where a child needs to attend such an appointment during the school day it is important that this is communicated with the pastoral or attendance department. If possible, after the appointment, the student can return to school.

### **Lateness/ Punctuality to school**

With the change in the school day in September 2024, your child needs to arrive at school for 8:30am each day. Lateness to school causes issues as the students are not starting the day ready to learn, missing vital information from form tutors or pastoral staff and 3 lates in a term results in a day in our internal isolation. We are preparing our students ready for the future and punctuality is important in the working environment.

We hope that these notes will help you to have a clear understanding about the school's expectations in this matter. Your child's education and well-being are at the heart of everything we do at Great Academy Ashton. We are fully committed to supporting both you and your child in meeting these attendance expectations, and we are here to listen and help in any way we can. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact the academy attendance office, we are here to support you.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and dedication to your child's education.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs R Dines

Assistant Principal – Attendance and Student Engagement