

15 July 2025

Dear Families,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Matthew Little, and I will be leading the Academy from the 1st of September 2025. I am truly excited and privileged to be handed this responsibility.

As you may already be aware, I am an experienced headteacher with a proven successful track-record of school improvement and have led marked improvements in my current school's (Darwen Vale High School) reputation, student outcomes and Ofsted grades. In my current post, under my leadership, the numbers on roll have increased from 700 students to almost 1200 and the school is now oversubscribed. In terms of examination outcomes, the school's Progress 8 score rose from -0.91 in 2018 to -0.15 in 2023. When I took over at Vale in 2017, the school had been graded 'inadequate' in 2015 and had not received a 'good' judgement for over a decade. Under my leadership the school was graded good in **all** areas and **overall**, in January 2024. Prior to this, I had successful experiences as a Deputy Headteacher in Salford, Bolton and Blackpool. I am committed to leading GAA to even greater comparative success over the coming years.

On a more personal level, I am a Salfordian, a father of three children, a Manchester United supporter and my main teaching subject is History. I was the first person in my family to go to university, supported by my parents (a machine tool fitter and a secretary) who both worked very hard. I was taught to set the bar high for myself and that there was no substitute for "hard graft". This upbringing has very much shaped my own approach to education.

I have always worked in schools in challenging circumstances, and I make no excuses for my high standards. It is a sign of mutual respect for the young people in our schools that we expect the very highest in terms of their effort and application in school. I want and expect the students at GAA to go on to university or a high-quality apprenticeship. Quite simply we want them to have sky high expectations of what they can achieve in life, work hard to get there and care deeply about themselves, others and their community. THE GREAT values of being genuine, respecting others, aspiring to excellent achievement and working together will support this vision.

So, what will I promise?

- High standards for student conduct and effort.
- High standards for the quality of teaching and learning at the school.
- High standards for students' academic performance.

What do I expect from students:

- 100% in all that they do; lessons, extra-curricular activities, behaviour and conduct.

You will be aware of the school's most recent Ofsted inspection in which GAA was graded good in four out of five inspection areas and highly commended for its "ambition" for pupils. The next steps are clear; together we are all going to raise our expectations of what our young people are capable of and support them through outstanding teaching to secure outcomes in line with highest achieving pupils across the country. A practical example of that is exemplified by our change to the methodology by which we set student targets. From September, all students will be set what are called FFT20 targets (compared with FFT50 in the past). What this means is that if students achieve these targets, they will be performing in line with the top 20% of students nationally, not the average. Our task is to ensure they are fully supported to meet these ambitious but achievable targets.

I look forward to working closely with parents and carers in September and beyond. Only through a close partnership between school and home will we be successful in supporting our young people to achieve their potential

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Little', with a small horizontal line at the end.

Matthew Little
Principal Great Academy Ashton