

24 October 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

I write to you as we approach the first break of the school year. Firstly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the whole Academy publicly for the way you have welcomed me to the school. Staff, students and parents have all been fantastic and I am really starting to feel part of the school community.

It certainly has been a busy eight weeks. I have been privileged to visit lots of our local Primary schools and speak to the year 6 students. We want to ensure strong transition to secondary school and ensure that our growing popularity in the local community continues to increase. These visits – to publicise our open evening and develop links – culminated in a hugely successful open evening on 2nd October. This was the best attended open evening in the school's history with 863 people in attendance. We are confident that this will translate into another oversubscribed year group in 2026. One of the visiting students won the competition for guessing the number of library loans our Year 7 students have had in the month of September; the total was 546 loans! As a result of winning, we will be donating £150 of books to their primary school library; a fitting legacy for a Year 6 student to leave behind for their fellow students.

At the other end of the school our efforts to support our year 11 students have intensified. We are now providing an additional period of tuition – we call it sunset, and it runs from 3.05pm - 4pm on Monday (Science) Tuesday (Maths) and Wednesday (English). There are on average 150 students attending these sessions regularly. Parents can see attendance to this session on the web version of MCAS (my child at school) and receive an email on a Monday for the previous week's attendance. If your child is not attending these it really is a missed opportunity. Private tuition in English maths and science can be more than £40 an hour. We are also starting to use Core PE time and tutor time to ensure the Year 11 students are fully supported to get those all-important English and maths qualifications. We presented to parents all our support strategies at our lift off evening on 25th September and gave out some goodies in the form of revision guides for English, maths and science that would cost more than £50 each. Let's hope they have used them to prepare for the recent Mock examinations. After half term we will analyse the results of these examinations and start planning lessons to close any gaps before the next set of mock exams in February.

Other year groups had a super special day planned by Mr Jacques our assistant principal. Students were rewarded for their hard work, positive attitudes, and commitment to our school values — Genuine, Respect, Excellence, Achieve, and Together — with an exciting end-of-term rewards trip!

Year 8 and 9 students spent a thrilling day at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, while our Year 10 and 11 students enjoyed the excitement of Alton Towers. These trips were a celebration of those who consistently demonstrate excellence in their learning, show respect in and out of the classroom, and contribute positively to our school culture. To earn their place, students needed to maintain a strong work ethic and show genuine effort in lessons. Their behaviour, dedication, and positive attitude made them shining examples of what it means to live our school values every day.

The trips were filled with laughter, teamwork, and a well-deserved chance to relax and have fun with friends and teachers. We are incredibly proud of every student who took part — they truly represented the very best of our school community. While some of our students were out enjoying their rewards trips, those who

remained in school had an amazing, action-packed day filled with creativity, challenge, and discovery. Our staff worked hard to plan a range of engaging and meaningful activities to ensure every student had a brilliant and rewarding experience.

We were delighted to welcome our Year 7 parents into school for their Settling in Day. This was a valuable opportunity for families to meet teachers, learn more about how their children are adjusting to secondary school life, and celebrate the fantastic start they've made to the year. Our Year 7 students also took part in a full day of exciting team-building and personal development activities. The day included an obstacle course, breakout room challenges, and drama-based workshops that encouraged creativity and collaboration. Every student also learned how to perform CPR and received a certificate for their achievement. Throughout the day, students developed key life skills such as resilience, communication, and confidence building. The event was a huge success and quickly became a firm favourite for our Year 7s so far this year. We ended the day with a celebration assembly, recognising outstanding effort and teamwork by presenting certificates to the best students in the year group.

Year 8 Students took part in our Enterprise and Business Day, designing and creating their own products, tackling a Social Enterprise challenge, and testing their teamwork and problem-solving skills through exciting business projects.

Year 9 explored the importance of Black History Month, discovering the inspiring stories of key black figures from history and learning about the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. It was a powerful and thought-provoking experience for all involved.

Our Year 10 students got hands-on with engaging Science projects and took part in focused revision sessions, sharpening their knowledge and preparing for the challenges ahead. Year 11 took their learning to the next level with in-depth explorations of *An Inspector Calls* and *Macbeth*, alongside a Maths Masterclass designed to build confidence and boost exam readiness.

Finally, parents will be aware of the trustee's decision to merge GAET with Dixons Academy Trust. This will bring many opportunities and a considerable network of support to enable us to take the next steps to be a truly great school that secures great outcomes for its students. I will continue to update parents on developments around merger as they arise.

May I take this opportunity to wish all our families and community a restful half term. Please take the time to spend some quality time together as families and we will look forward to welcoming our students back into school at the usual timings on Monday 3rd November.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Little', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Little