



Great Western Academy Handbook

For Parents and Carers of students admitted for September 2023

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Core Values

Great Western Academy sets the highest possible standards in each of these three areas:

Achievement: Innovative and effective teaching and learning that leads to outstanding achievements in academic, artistic, sporting and cultural activities.

Care: For students, staff, the environment and the wider community.

Excellence: In standards, manners, honesty, personal integrity and mutual respect.

Students receive 'ACE' points for strong achievement, showing care for each other or for the Academy community, or showing excellence in an event or activity. The work of our staff is focused on these areas, and the Academy's development planning will always focus on building from these core values.

We hope the spirit of 'ACE' comes through in the rest of this booklet.

Practical information for the start of term

The Tutor: Your child's tutor is the main point of contact between the student, home and school and should be the first person a parent contacts with any concerns. The tutor looks after the same tutor group from Year 7 to Year 11 and is concerned with the well-being, progress, guidance and general welfare of the students. Students meet their tutors daily for morning registration and the 'Successful Lives' PSHE programme and again in the afternoon for the daily reading session.

Our House System: The school is divided into three Houses; **Aderin**, **Peake** and **Sharman** with two tutor groups from each year group allocated to each House. The Houses are named after British space explorers, representing aspiration, hard work and technological innovation.

| Aderin House | | Peake House | | Sharman House | |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------|---|---------------|---|
| 7A1 | Tutor – Miss H. Clarke | 7P1 | Tutor – Mrs H. Alabidi and Mrs A. Ellis | 7S1 | Tutor – Mrs N. Harding-Selman and Ms. L. Townsend |
| 7A2 | Tutor – Mr D. Townsend | 7P2 | Tutor – Mrs Harmer | 7S2 | Tutor – Mr B. Simpson |

Houses provide both the pastoral structure and an opportunity for joint events across the Academy, many of them competitive. These include sports, music, drama, dance competitions, public speaking events, and many more. The results of these competitions, together with ACE point totals, result in an overall House winner each year, with interim standings published at the end of each term.

As the Academy grows House competitions will increasingly be cross-year events, allowing for excellent opportunities for students to work with older students. Siblings are placed in the same House, allowing Heads of House to know and work closely with families.

The Key Stage 2/3 Progress and Transition Leader is **Miss Rachel Sparrow**.

Essential Equipment

All students are expected to bring the following with them to school every day, in a pencil case. All other stationery and equipment will be provided when necessary.

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 black pens (biros preferred)• 2 pencils• Green biro• Purple biro• Pencil sharpener | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rubber• 30 cm Ruler• Protractor• Pair of compasses• Scientific calculator |
|--|---|

School Day and Timetable:

The GWA school day runs 8.30am to 4.15pm Tuesday to Thursday and 8.30 to 3.10pm on Mondays and Fridays. Timings are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| 8.00 – 8.30am | Breakfast Club <i>(optional)</i> |
| 8.30 – 8.50am | Assembly / form time / registration |
| 8.50 – 9.40am | Lesson 1 |
| 9.40 – 10.30am | Lesson 2 |
| 10.30 – 10.50am | Break |
| 10.50 – 11.40am | Lesson 3 |
| 11.40 – 12.30pm | Lesson 4 |
| 12.30 – 1.10pm | Lunch |
| 1.10 – 1.30pm | Reading Session |
| 1.30 – 2.20pm | Lesson 5 |
| 2.20 – 3.10pm | Lesson 6 |
| 3.10 – 4.15pm | Enrichment / Independent Study <i>(not Mondays and Fridays)</i> |

Students must be in their tutor rooms by 8.30am each day, so arrival on site by 8.25am at the latest would be expected. Timetables for lessons will be provided to students at the start of term and will be available through our student and parent portals. GWA operates a '1-week' timetable – each week will have the same lessons at the same times, so students should get into good habits reasonably quickly about what they will need to bring each day. For example, PE kit will only be needed on days when PE and Dance are being taught.

Breakfast Club (8am) is optional. During these times students will be supervised in agreed areas without any direct input from staff. We are unable to supervise students before 8am.

Uniform

All students in Years 7 – 11 wear school uniform. The Academy uniform is important because it generates a sense of belonging and purpose. Students are proud to wear our uniform. Students represent themselves and GWA outside of school and are expected to maintain high standards whenever and wherever the uniform is worn, including travelling to and from GWA.

The full uniform and PE kit list is provided on the website. GWA branded items are available from the Famous School Brands shop, or online, and representatives are present at the induction evening.

Please find below the following links –

- [Top Tips](#) – A parent page detailing our top tips for their uniform shopping experience.
- [New Starter Hub](#) – This link will lead parents directly to our New Starter Hub on the website, including the appointment booking page.

***!! Please mark all garments – uniform and PE kit –
with students' names!!***

Attendance

We expect students to attend every day except in the case where illness prevents this. Attendance at school is a key driver for success; several studies have shown a clear link between attendance and outcomes ... which is not especially surprising! So, we would ask that you only keep students at home if absolutely necessary, and if you need to do this to email **attendance@gwcademy.co.uk** to notify us for each day they are away (by 8.30am each morning).

GWA uses an electronic registering system which keeps track of lateness and attendance for each lesson of the day. Attendance is closely monitored and unexplained absences quickly investigated, including contacting parents if a student has not arrived and the absence line has not been called. Students' attendance records will be available on the parent portal, **My Child At School**.

If a student is absent from school they will be expected to catch up with work missed; reasonable deadlines will be set for this to be done.

Medical and dental appointments should be made in the school holidays if at all possible. If this is not possible then a note must be sent to the school office explaining the time of the appointment, with time absent from school minimised if at all possible (e.g. appointment at start or end of the day, or child collected and returned to school if the appointment is during the day).

GWA will not authorise holidays in term time, except in truly exceptional circumstances, and we expect parents to support this in order to help ensure all students make the best possible progress. If in the unlikely scenario you need to request that a student be absent, a request form should be completed. This is available from the school office.

Break and Lunch Times

The designated areas where students can eat are the main dining area and the outside social space. No eating is permitted in classrooms, sports areas, the hall or corridors in order to set the tone that meals are time to sit and socialise – not wander around – and to minimise litter.

Students are able to use designated indoor spaces, such as the library, the outdoor social area and the MUGA (Multi-use Games Area) during breaks, as well as the field during good weather. They are not allowed in other parts of the building at these times without permission from staff. Staff will be on duty to monitor behaviour and safety, and the same excellent standards are expected at break times as in lessons. A less busy indoor space is also provided for students who would like a quieter time during breaks.

Cashless transactions

It is our ambition to use cash as little as possible in order to avoid students losing money, to reduce conflict between students over cash and to make our own systems as efficient as possible. School meals, school trips and other payments must be made on-line through ParentPay.

Students will normally use their fingerprint to "pay" for food transactions. Please return the Consent Form so that we can quickly ensure the system is up and running for all students when they arrive.

You will receive more information on this via email at the start of September.

Catering

Meals are served in the dining area on an "a la carte" system. It is possible to have a snack or a full meal. Individual items of food and drink are priced separately and there is a considerable choice. Sales are made via a cashless system (ParentPay) which allows parents to upload money in advance and to monitor how it is spent.

On Tuesday 5th September a free lunch meal is available to all new Year 7 students.

Contacting Us

Your first point of contact is your son or daughter's tutor. You can call and leave a message for them (if they are not available to speak with you immediately) on **01793 209700**, between 8am and 4.30pm, or email them via office@gwacademy.co.uk stating clearly who you would like the mail forwarded to. General enquiries or questions can also be sent to office@gwacademy.co.uk, your son or daughter's House Team, or call **01793 209700** after opening.

We will respond as soon as we reasonably can, and always within three working days. *(Please note that the email account and phone line will not always be regularly monitored during school holidays).*

Curriculum

Our Key Stage 3 curriculum provides students with a broad and balanced range of subjects which should enable them to explore and develop their interests ready to make choices for GCSE study. All students have thirty 50-minute lessons each week in the subjects listed below, plus 1 hr 40 minutes of registration and assembly time (in which PSHE is covered in our 'Successful Lives' programme), plus 1 hr 40 minutes of reading time each week, plus 3hrs of enrichment time.

The number of 50-minute lessons in each subject in Years 7 and 8 are:

| | | | |
|------------|---|-----------|---|
| English | 4 | DT | 2 |
| Maths | 4 | Computing | 1 |
| Science | 4 | Art | 1 |
| Languages* | 2 | PE | 3 |
| Geography | 2 | Drama | 1 |
| History | 2 | Dance | 1 |
| RS | 1 | Music | 1 |
| PSHE | 1 | | |

*French and Spanish. *A small number of students may study fewer language lessons in order to receive extra support in literacy and/or numeracy.*

Enrichment Time

(Tuesday – Thursday 3.10 – 4.15pm)

All students participate in Enrichment on Tuesday – Thursday, where they can select from a wide range of activities or choose to complete homework. Enrichment activities are changed on a regular basis where students can select new options. Options include sport, performing arts, a range of clubs, and, in due course, the chance to gain further qualifications or work with local organisations.

Attendance at the enrichment sessions is compulsory. It is a key aspect of the GWA experience and it is very much part of our philosophy that learning is not all about subjects and exam results but should be much broader. Opportunities are intended to develop students' skills and interests further, or simply to provide an opportunity to try new things.

Parents who wish to offer to run/support an enrichment session are encouraged to contact the Academy.

E-safety and Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP)

All students and parents must read and sign the ICT Student/Student Acceptable Use Policy, which will be given to students in September. If students break any of the rules regarding the responsible use of email and the Internet then they will be stopped from using the computers. In particular GWA takes any incidents involving cyber bullying very seriously and we constantly strive to help the young people in our care to stay safe whilst online.

Any intentional damage to school devices may incur a charge.

Free School Meals

If you meet particular conditions related to your personal financial situation your child may be entitled to Free School Meals. You may also be eligible for uniform subsidy and financial support with school trips. If you fall into any of the following categories you may be able to claim:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more

than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

If a student is eligible for Free School Meals, the money allocation is automatically transferred to the child's account, making it easy to claim and use.

If you are entitled to apply for Free School Meals **please do so even if you don't intend to take up the opportunity**. The reason for this is that as some of the income of the School is based on the number of students *eligible* for Free School Meals. If you are uncertain about whether you may be entitled to Free School Meals please contact us by telephone or letter, and we will advise you about how to proceed.

Friends of GWA

GWA has established a Parent / Teacher / Friends association to promote co-operation and friendly relations among parents, staff and the local community for the well-being of the School. The Friends of GWA (FoGWA) raise funds for the School, by fostering social and cultural activities, and by providing opportunities for parents to find out more about school matters. If you are interested in becoming a member of FoGWA, and haven't indicated already on the Student Information Form, please contact the school office.

Governors

The GWA Governing Body is enhanced by the appointment of parent governors. Information

about the opportunity to become a parent governor will be published during the 2023/24 academic year.

Grouping of Students

Year groups are organised into six tutor groups of approximately 28 students. Tutor groups have been carefully constructed to be of mixed abilities and will allow for preferences from primary schools about which students should (or should not) be together, though there are always limitations on us being able to accommodate all preferences. Lessons in some subjects – Performing Arts, PE, Design Technology – will be taught in tutor groups.

Where students are set there are three sets in each half of the year are created based on Key Stage 2 results and any other data available from primary schools. This provides a balance where students can be appropriately challenged from day 1, yet also gives a slightly broader grouping to allow for the natural variation there will be in KS2 results.

Importantly, movement between groups will take place regularly – at least every term – and will be based on student progress. The sets will have an average size of 26, with more able groups being slightly larger to allow for smaller groups where some students may have challenging learning needs.

Home Learning

We strongly believe that completing an appropriate amount of learning outside of lesson time helps foster independence, generates strong organisation skills, helps cover more content, and sets students up well for their future working lives. Students should expect their home learning tasks to last an hour to an hour and a half each day in Year 7, increasing gradually as they progress through the school.

Home learning tasks will be available on the student and parent portals, with deadlines for submission made clear. Types of task will vary – from 'routine' consolidation of learning through to more open-ended research tasks.

Clearly we expect students to put good effort into their home learning tasks and to meet deadlines. If they do they will be rewarded with ACE points. However, it is very important to say that we do not expect students to struggle with a challenging piece of work; instead they should show they have made an effort to do it, and talk to their teacher before submitting it to explain. This means the teacher can help and support them. A student will only get into trouble over home learning if they hand in no work, or work where effort has clearly been poor, without talking about it to the teacher first.

Completion of home learning tasks is also an option for enrichment time Tuesday to Thursday until 4.15pm.

Instrumental Teaching at GWA for Year 7 students

In addition to class music lessons, we strongly encourage students to take the opportunity of continuing or taking up instrumental lessons. Currently we are able to offer lessons in:

- **Woodwind:** Flute/Recorder/Clarinet/Bassoon
- **Brass:** Trumpet/Cornet/French Horn/
Eb Horn/Trombone/Euphonium/Tuba
- **Strings:** Double Bass/Violin/Viola/Cello
- **Guitar:** Bass/Acoustic/Electric
- **Saxophone**
- **Piano**
- **Keyboard**
- **Drums**
- **Singing**

Lessons are taught by the Swindon Music Co-operative. Please be aware that some instruments are very popular and there may be a waiting list. Information regarding cost of lessons and availability of instruments for purchase / rental can be found on the separate form in your welcome pack.

Keeping you informed

Engaging with parents and helping them to play a key role in student success will always have a high priority at GWA. Contact is not limited to the 'formal' opportunities described in this section. In addition parents are encouraged to contact

teachers where any concerns arise.

Every day: The parent portal is updated with records of ACE points, attendance, home learning tasks and important notices.

Progress Reports: Parents receive three annual reports. The reports contain 'Attitudes to Learning' scores for all year groups – three separate grades covering behaviour for learning, quality of classwork, and quality of home learning. A mean score will be calculated for each student across their subjects and included in the report together with the year group mean for comparison purposes.

In Years 7 and 8 the reports will indicate whether students are 'Making expected progress', 'Making more than expected progress' or 'Making less than expected progress'.

In Years 10 and above reports will also contain a Most Likely Outcome and a Potential Grade for each subject. Colour coding on the report will help parents to see whether students are on track to reach their Potential Grades.

Parents' Evenings: Parents' Evenings provide the opportunity for teachers and parents to discuss student progress, reasons for celebration and targets for improvement. In Year 7 there will be two consultation opportunities, one after the first half term to address how students have settled, and one later in the academic year.

Parent Information Evenings: GWA will hold occasional parent information and guidance evenings which will focus on topical matters. Dates will be published in advance.

Laptop Devices

At GWA, we are preparing students for successful lives in the 21st century. This involves the ability to confidently use ICT in a range of different circumstances. For this reason, GWA students are issued with a laptop device to be used in school and much of their learning will take place using the laptop device to research, record and communicate their learning. These devices stay in school each day, but students save all of their work to the cloud on their Microsoft Office 365

account, enabling them to access it anywhere in the world at any time on any internet compatible device, provided they have an internet connection. Not all lessons use these devices all of the time and traditional exercise books are also used in all subjects. We aim to ensure the use of technology is appropriate; where it offers a better experience for learners, we will use ICT, but where more traditional methods are as effective, we will use them.

Lockers

Students may make use of a Locker. They will need to provide a padlock for their locker. We recommend a combination lock rather than a key, to avoid losing keys.

If students have to bring heavy, bulky, easily breakable or valuable items to school, then rather than try to carry them around each lesson, they should use their lockers, or if the item is too large, arrange with the tutor a safe place for them to be kept until they are required.

Lost Property

Here's another chance to remind you to please ***name all items of clothing, including PE kit, and other valuables!*** Items of lost property will be returned to students if named, and held at reception for a period of time.

Medication

If a student is required to be given medicine throughout the school day, a form must be completed, signed and discussed with Mrs Bright. The medication will be kept in the school office. No student is allowed to hold their own medication except in agreed circumstances.

Mobile Phones

Our policy on the use of mobile phones is straightforward: we understand students want to travel to and from school with their mobile phones but when they are on the school site their phones must be switched off and out of sight. We advise students to place their mobile phones in their lockers during the day. If a student is found to be using a mobile phone during the school day without permission, their phone will be confiscated and held for collection

by their parent/carer. This is because mobile phones are a distraction from learning and are unnecessary in school. If a student needs to make an urgent call to a parent/carer, they can ask at the school office who will arrange for this to happen.

Parent and Student Portals

Parents are able to log in to a service called 'My Child at School' (MCAS) and this is a 'one-stop shop' for information including ACE points awarded, attendance, home learning tasks, parents' evening bookings, reports, and all general information and notices. Students are able to see much of the same information through their student portal.

Please check MCAS regularly for school announcements and updates including details of weekly menus and regular newsletters.

In general, only those with Parental Responsibility will be given access to MCAS. You will have indicated on your transition information form which parents/carers require logins to MCAS. Details of these will be sent at the start of term.

Parental Contributions

At GWA, we are committed to providing the very best education possible. Whilst our facilities are state-of-the-art and students will enjoy very well resourced classrooms, in common with most secondary schools, our budget is such that any extra income will always be very welcome and will be put to good use. We do not expect parents to contribute, but if you would like to make an annual or one-off donation, for a specific reason or for general use, we will explain how you can do this in September. Please be reassured students will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made a contribution.

Policies

Full versions of Academy policies are available from the Academy website once approved by Governors.

Reading

At GWA, we believe that reading is to the mind

what exercise is to the body. Being able to read confidently is crucial to success in life and we do all we can to encourage and challenge students at GWA to read. Each day features a 20 minute reading session in support of our aim to make every student at GWA a confident reader.

The academy uses the Accelerated Reader (AR) programme to help ensure appropriate challenge for our students and to track and monitor their progress as readers, enabling swift, focused intervention where a student's progress has stalled. AR is well established in many countries and the programme has worked with nearly 3 million children worldwide. Research in English schools, conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation (and supported by the Department for Education) found that where children engaged well with the programme in Year 7, up to five months additional progress was made in their reading compared with those not using AR.

We always encourage parents to read with their children, even if they feel confident their child is already reading 'freely'. Exploring literature together, both fiction and non-fiction, is crucially important in securing a love of reading for life.

Rewards and Sanctions

Our Positive Behaviour Policy is centred around rewarding students where they have displayed achievement, care or excellence.

Rewards: When students have met or exceeded our expectations or have made a significant improvement, they can expect to receive ACE points. The points are collected throughout the year and count towards the House point total in the annual House championship.

ACE points can be awarded by any member of staff for positive actions from students such as:

- Perceptive contributions to lessons which move learning forward for all
- Impressive effort in a particular lesson or series of lessons
- Impressive effort on home learning tasks
- Completing an Accelerated Reader quiz at 90% or above
- Behaviour supportive of someone else in the Academy community

- Representing your House at an event
- Representing the Academy in extra-curricular activities
- Representing the Academy at public events
- Excellent attendance

This list is not exhaustive and staff may award ACE Points for other positive actions at their discretion. Up to three ACE Points may be awarded for any one action.

Accolades have a currency of five ACE Points and may be awarded by any member of staff for exceptional performance in any of the areas listed above.

ACE points are recorded electronically with totals available on student and parent portals. Termly awards are distributed to students and tutor groups with the best ACE Point totals.

Sanctions: We are unapologetic about having high expectations of students. Any student who disrupts learning, threatens the health, safety and wellbeing of others or brings the reputation of the Academy into disrepute can expect a consequence in order to send a clear message to themselves and to other students that such behaviour is not tolerated.

Class teachers ensure good behaviour within lessons and completion of work to a strong standard by using strategies such as:

- A range of non-verbal signals to a student
- Brief, positively-phrased words reminding students of expected behaviour
- Clear warning that behaviour is impacting the learning of others and will lead to escalation unless changed
- Removal from the classroom for a short period; clear terms for reintegration established, including strategy such as a change of seating
- Removal to work in a different location for the remainder of a lesson
- Removal from a particular subject to work in a different location as agreed with the subject lead

If a student needs to be removed, or warnings are needed too often, then the class teacher will set a break or lunchtime detention and the behaviour and sanction is recorded electronically on the student's file.

House Teams monitor patterns of behaviour recorded by teachers. Where incidents are not isolated, and to deal directly with more serious incidents or with incidents which occur outside of lessons, the House Teams with agreement of the Assistant Principal may use any of the following sanctions:

- Break or lunchtime detention or after school detention (4.15pm – 5.15pm)
- Use of a report card to monitor behaviour or completion of work
- Internal isolation for one or more lessons
- Meeting with parents/carers to agree a positive strategy for improvement

Where actions listed above are ineffective, or where an incident is serious enough to merit stronger action, the Principal may instigate further sanctions in line with our Behaviour Policy (available on the school website).

School Parliament and Student Voice

The School Parliament is the main student voice forum at GWA. Each tutor group elects a student to the role of Member of the School Parliament, along with a Deputy MSP. The School Parliament meets once per term and MSPs are also expected to attend smaller committee meetings throughout the year.

Term Dates

Are available on our website.

Transport to School

GWA encourages young people to make healthy lifestyle decisions for their personal benefit and for the sake of their environment. Most GWA students walk or cycle to school, usually in small groups who live close to each other. GWA is served by paved, lit pathways from Tadpole Garden Village which in turn has good access to other parts of North Swindon via paths and cycle routes.

If cycling to school, students **must** wear a helmet, which can be stored in their locker on arrival. Cycle sheds are provided, and these are locked during the school day. We hope to offer cycling proficiency qualifications as part of our enrichment time.

GWA is served by the Stagecoach number 9 bus which travels from Swindon town centre to Tadpole Garden Village via St Andrew's Ridge, and by the 107 service which was put on specially for the school to serve much of North Swindon. These buses stop within the school car park. A few students also use the number 12 bus to reach Oakhurst and making the short walk from there.

Trips and Visits

Learning outside of the confines of the Academy is very much part of GWA's philosophy and each year a number of trips will be planned for students. Parents will be informed in advance of the main trips that are planned, so that they can budget accordingly. It is our wish that all students who want to take part in such activities will be able to do so, and if the school can provide financial assistance for particular families it will endeavour to do so. We have made a commitment that students will have the opportunity to travel abroad with GWA at some point between Years 7 and 11.

Website

Our website address is www.gwacademy.co.uk. Visit here to keep up to date with the information we produce.

Your data and GWA

GWA holds data about students and parents/carers to ensure that we can provide the best possible education for students and to communicate effectively with parents and carers. We are also obliged by law to share certain pieces of information with other bodies such as the Department for Education. We follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and have a Data Protection Officer (DPO) in place. If you would like more information about the data we hold and how we use it please see our Privacy Notice available on the GWA website