

Dear Parents and Carers

I have very mixed emotions as I write my final letter to you after 26 years as head teacher of this fantastic school.

Whilst I am looking forward to retirement, I will of course miss the school, which has been such a big part of my life for so long and I cannot imagine how I will feel when I walk through the gate for the very last time and relinquish the position that I have been proud and privileged to hold.

The headteacher's role comes with a huge amount of responsibility and there have of course been difficult times along the way. In a recent moment of reminiscence, however, I looked back on the handwritten letter of application to Mr Townley, the chair of governors at the time that I was appointed, which I ended by saying that; 'If am lucky enough to be appointed to the post for which I have applied in your school, I will approach the position with a great deal of determination and do my utmost to justify the confidence placed in me by yourself.' I have done my very best to fulfil that promise and I have an abundance of fantastic memories to take away with me that by far outweigh any difficulties that I have faced.

I have worked with many outstanding, committed and talented teachers and support staff and have received tremendous support from many governors over the years and we have always worked together as a team. I have also had incredible support from parents and members of the community and I will cherish the memory of many occasions on which the school has been absolutely packed to the rafters for special occasions and events. Inevitably, not all decisions that I have made have been popular with everyone, but I am proud of the fact that I have never taken an easy option and have always put the school and the children first.

I am also proud that, as a school, we have always done things 'our way' and have not bowed to pressure to change things that didn't need to be changed but have taken the best of any new initiatives to improve what was already in place and discarded anything that did not add value to the experience that we have given to our children. This includes an exciting, enriched and diverse curriculum and personal, social and emotional support to our children that I believe is second to none. Our inclusivity to children with additional needs, disabilities and barriers to learning has also been of the highest order and I am immensely proud when I meet and hear about former pupils of all abilities who have gone on to be successful.

I have always believed, and still believe, that Ellington Primary School is a special place where children are nurtured and instilled with a love for learning that will hopefully remain with them throughout their lives. It is a place where there is fun and laughter, in spite of the incredible demands now made on schools and pressure put on children to achieve so much in a world in which I believe it is increasingly difficult to grow up. Our mantra is 'Education without Compromise', and this is not only about achievement but about the development of the whole child, including their mental health and wellbeing and their ability to safeguard themselves.

The world is of course changing rapidly in many ways at the moment and the time is right for a change in leadership at the school to take it into its next stage of development and to meet the many challenges that lie ahead. I wish Mr Hodgson every success in meeting these challenges, which I am sure will include many exciting opportunities for the children as things hopefully begin to return to normal. I know that he will receive great support from Mrs Pirie, who knows the school, our families and the community so well, from the staff, governors and from you.

I hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and well as the pandemic continues to affect all of our lives and I wish you, Mr Hodgson, the staff, children and members of our community every success in the future.

Tomorrow is of course the last day of term and the children are not required to wear school uniform.

The children have brought home their end of term reports today and I hope that you are pleased with their achievements in spite of the difficult year that we have had.

School closes at 3pm tomorrow and reopens on 8th September, when staggered start times etc. will no longer be in place. This means that children in Reception to Year 6 will start school at 8.50 am and finish at 3.00pm. Nursery sessions remain unchanged.

Mr Hodgson is planning to restart breakfast and after school clubs in the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> September and will send out further information in due course.

I have also been asked to inform you of the cost of school dinners from September, which are free of charge for children in Reception and Years 1 & 2 due to the Government Infant Free School Meals Scheme and children in receipt of income-based free school meals.

The cost of dinners for Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 are:-

Per Day	£2.30
Per Week	£11.50
Half Term (until 22.10.21)	£75.90
Full Term (until 17.12.21)	£156.40

It is preferable for payments to be made online via School Grid, using your personalised login if at all possible. Dinner money can be paid in advance for the half term or full term. It also eases administration considerably if you pre-order children's meals from home.

Please contact the school office if your child has any dietary requirements.

Finally, there will be adverts on the Northumberland County Council- Jobs North East website in the next few days for anyone interested in applying for them:

Admin Assistant  
Catering Assistant  
Lunchtime Supervisor  
Cleaner

So that is it, my final letter is complete, and for the last time I would like to thank you for your continued support and for the many kind messages that I have received since announcing my retirement.

Yours sincerely

Mr K Vardy