Friday 18th December 2020

Dears Parents / Carers

Well I can hardly believe this week has arrived! Today I say goodbye to the staff and pupils at Kings Mill School after seven years of being the Headteacher. From the first time I visited the school back in the Summer term of 2013 I felt at home. The welcome was genuine and warm and I knew instantly that I wanted the job! When I started in post I was lodging in the East Riding Monday to Friday and travelling back to Calderdale every weekend which was a challenge but eventually we managed to move across and we love it so much that we have decided to stay.

It has been an eventful seven years. When I came we had one small building that had definitely seen better days. I was told that work on our new building would be starting soon. In fact, it was towards the end of the Summer Term 2014 before we saw any real progress was made and I still remember the excitement when we actually saw a machine moving a piece of frame across the site!

Of course 2013 saw the opening of our student Centre based at Driffield School and our first class of sixth form students. Initially our Key Stage 4 students were also up there and stayed until our building work was complete. At the end of the year we also moved the youngest pupils to Gembling School whilst the new build was taking place. This meant that for the next three years we were operating on three sites with a journey of twenty miles to get round all three sites. This had its challenges but in true Kings Mill spirit everyone embraced the challenge and we all have very happy and fond memories of our Gembling years.

In 2016 Phase 1 was completed and we squeezed into this building whilst still using Gembling and the Student Centre. Finally, the old building was demolished and we finally saw the completion of Phase 2 in 2017 and had the grand move in in the September. Of course when we moved in there were snags but we all appreciated the extra space and our wonderful facilities.

As I retire the school is very different to the school that I first visited. Obviously we are now in a new building but we have also almost doubled in size in the number of pupils and staff. We have made ’Learning for Life’ our focus, building on the good work that had already been started in the school. We continue to be very much at the heart of the community and continue to go out and about in our minibuses. In a normal year we would have offered a number of residential opportunities ranging from camping for our Junior aged pupils through to a French activity experience for our senior and sixth form students. Sadly, this has not happened this year but we eagerly await the time when we can travel again.

I leave feeling immensely proud of our school. We have a wonderful staff team who are willing to go the extra mile and all passionately want the best for the pupils. The governing body support the school and challenge us to strive for excellence. I know I am leaving the school in good hands. Alison has been a support to me ever since I came to Kings Mill and has worked with me to achieve good Ofsted outcomes. I am confident that she will continue to move the school forward over the next year and will be supported by the rest of the school leadership team and the governors.

What next? Well our aim was to enjoy some travel in our motorhome and particularly to explore Europe outside of school holidays! Obviously that will not be possible in the immediate future but we hope to at least be able to get away in this country before too long. Our first grandchild is due in March which is perfect timing and we plan to visit our daughter and son-in-law in Wales when the baby arrives. Other than that we now have a large garden which will keep us busy and some work to do on our house.

I am sorry that I haven’t been able to see you all at assemblies due to COVID restrictions and of course that we haven’t been able to have our usual Christmas events. However, I plan to come back to join parents for coffee as soon as assemblies can start again.

Finally, thank you all for your support during my time as Headteacher. It has genuinely been a privilege and although it has had its challenges I have loved my job. Thank you for all your good wishes.

I do hope you can all enjoy Christmas. Best wishes to you and your families.



Gail Lawton

Headteacher