



Grange First School.
Norham Road, Gosforth.
Newcastle upon Tyne. NE3 2NP
Tel: 0191 2852954

Email: admin@grange.newcastle.sch.uk
www.grange.newcastle.sch.uk



@grange_first

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Thank you Grange Family!

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing this letter at the start of my last week as headteacher of Grange First School after having had the privilege of leading this exceptional school for nearly ten years.

I never imagined leaving at such an unusual time and I feel particularly sad that I cannot do what I really want to which is to meet and speak with each of you in the playground and say thank you and goodbye to everyone.



As I cannot thank you all in person, I will try to express in this letter just a little of what I feel about Grange.

Grange First School has served its community with pride for over 70 years and will continue to do so for many, many years ahead. Over the latest part of its history, there has been a huge amount of growth and change, but I hope you will agree that we have been able to keep the uniqueness of Grange First and have retained, more than ever in these difficult times, our sense of family and community. I remember a comment that stood out for me in my first year at Grange when a parent said that Grange was Gosforth's 'hidden gem'. I was very proud of the gem part, but equally determined not to be hidden as we had so much to shout about! Since then we have grown to be the third most applied for school in the city and this popularity and our successes reflect the support, togetherness and strength of the Grange Family.

Thank you Grange parents, grandparents and friends: Fellow headteachers, are probably fed up with me constantly talking about how proud of the Grange parents and our community I am. Throughout my time here, you have shown enormous support towards all we have tried to achieve. In your hundreds you have run round muddy fields, squeezed into the school hall for concerts, waited in the cold to collect from clubs, made costumes, donated to our charities, decorated countless eggs and vegetables, volunteered to read with our children, come in to school to support our topics and, through the PTA, put on so many great events. Above all, you support your children's learning and happiness and through your enthusiasm and kind words, you spur us on in our work.

The reaction of the Grange Community to the Covid crisis for me exemplifies everything that makes this school so special. During a very challenging year, you have not only shown enormous support for the school, but also for each other and our wider community. From Grange children leading the way in showing our support for the NHS and carers with rainbows in windows, to the huge collections and donations to local charities, we demonstrated the kind of school we are. However, what really meant so much was the sense of solidarity with each other. There were many, many private calls and messages from you asking what you could do to support other families in the school throughout this period and some incredible acts of generosity.

Thank you school governors: I have been very fortunate to work with many dedicated and talented governors who reflect our community well and have offered such excellent support to me and to the school.

Throughout my time at Grange, they have provided, on your children's behalf, challenge, thoughtful questioning and suggestions and, above all, a deep commitment to the needs of our children and families.

Thank you Grange Staff: It has been a pleasure to have worked with such a dynamic, creative, fun and relentlessly enthusiastic team of staff at Grange. We may have nearly tripled in size, but I hope we kept a sense of togetherness and teamwork that is so important for the children. From our dinner staff, cleaners, teaching assistants, teachers, admin officers, caretaker and family support, there is a huge commitment to our children, passion for the job and a sense of pride and belonging. Across school there are countless conversations, always based on improving outcomes for our children, so many people going just that bit further to offer support and...endless suggestions for new and exciting activities that the headteacher has to go along with!

Thank you Grange Children (past and present!): Above all, it is and it always will be the children who make our school. Thinking back over 10 years of memories, it is their faces that spring up; sometimes laughing, sometimes fiercely determined and occasionally bravely overcoming a personal difficulty. Children from many different backgrounds some of whose parents and grandparents went to our school and some who have only moved to our country in recent years, but who happily learn, play and grow together. Some of you will remember with me the noise and colour of our carnival where ASDA shopping trolleys were proudly transformed into colourful floats as we marched through the streets. And there were the nights at the Northern Stage where we watched our Year 4 swell with pride as they performed Shakespeare, the Grange North Run finishes where a class sensed another child might be struggling and the supportive cheers got louder and louder, Reception performing their dance at the City Hall, Gosforth Voices on tour...the concerts, visits, theme days, special events...all have particular memories, but my enduring memory will be of being so lucky to walk in to work every day to be greeted by questions, smiles and such friendliness and kindness.



Leaving Grange is made easier by knowing the school has an exceptional new headteacher in Clare Clougher. Over a series of visits this term, Clare has got to know the school and has impressed us already with her understanding of Grange and her dedication and commitment to the school and the children. I know with the support from all of you that she will be as happy as I have been and that I will look across enviously at all the exciting things you achieve in the years ahead.

When our Year 4 children leave each summer there are a number of traditions. One is that we make them walk through the arch of tears where every member of the school joins hands to allow our oldest children to pass through on their last afternoon. Another thing we do is to tell the children that wherever they go in life they will take a small piece of Grange with them and that they will always be a treasured part of our Grange Family. Luckily, I have avoided the arches of tears this year, but I hope all of you will allow me to go into the future always proud to say I have been and still am a part of the Grange First School Family!

Matt Ward (Headteacher and proud member of the Grange Family)

