



Dear Parents

I have to say that it has been a huge privilege over the last 25 years to have served you as Headteacher of QES. I can also say that, save for one or two dark days of sad losses, it has been a real pleasure. I really feel I couldn't have had a better, more fulfilling job in education.

I have had the privilege to share the custodianship of the School with some fine Governors some of whom have exercised their responsibilities for over a quarter of a century. They really have been a professional body, offering a balance of challenge and support, judicious in taking tough decisions, offering a wisdom, experience and sound judgement honed in their varied and successful backgrounds. Their commitment to the School has been deeply felt and without self interest. In particular, I am indebted to three first rate Chairmen - Graham Bettridge, Ty Power and Fenner Pearson. All associated with QES should know just how important these three have been in giving so much time, thought and commitment to ensuring the stable context within which QES has thrived.

I hope also that parents really do appreciate the quality of the QES staff. Of course your children will have their favourites but, believe me, this group of staff are the best. If you look back over the last ten to fifteen years, what is staggering is the unwavering consistency of results at all levels achieved without the curriculum tricks pulled by some places to boost performance for accountability purposes. And then there are the levels of care which I think are unrivalled, an absolute commitment to keeping young people safe, happy and well. Staggering too are all the extras, a catalogue of opportunities for which parents pay private schools a fortune, all delivered by staff for no financial gain and often at significant personal cost. What parents may not see quite so much in relation to the QES staff is the thing I shall miss most – the friendliness, the mutual support, the sense of community, the sense of shared responsibility and belief in a common philosophy and set of values.

Over the years, I have been humbled by the trust, support and encouragement of so many parents. While I know that most subscribe wholeheartedly to the QES 'scholarship and care' and to an education founded on values and the pursuit of the highest standards for all individuals, I am ever aware of the cost to so many families who put themselves out in so many ways to send children to QES. All the growth and development of the last 25 years is entirely down to parents who have put their faith in our ability to get the very best out of their children. We are filled with gratitude and thanks especially to those who have seen QES as an extension of their family life and who have supported sports teams, arts ventures, community activities, trips and visits often for successive siblings.

In truth, your faith in a QES education is what sustains us. In September, the 426th year since the iron key I've guarded in my office first turned in the lock of the oaken door in the original QE schoolhouse, a new school will begin its distinctive and exciting history, born of the old and founded on its principles. In a culmination of our succession plan, its first Headteacher, Alison Wilkinson will join with Cathy O'Neill, the first female Headteacher of QES in leading the schools into the most exciting of futures. Happily for me, I'll still be around, albeit in the background, to witness the dawn of this new era, taking on a part-time role as the CEO of the new Lunesdale Learning Trust, established to incorporate the two schools into one family.

While I'm happy still to have a role to play at this exciting time, I know it won't be the same as having the great honour to lead our wonderful community. However, particularly with the inception of the Studio School, the time is right for a change and I couldn't be more delighted than to hand over to Cathy and Alison for whom I have the greatest fondness, admiration and respect. For some time now, I have been in awe at their ability, their energy, their commitment to the values and principles and, of course their deep empathetic understanding of all the people who comprise our QES world. In thanking you finally for all you've ever done to keep me buoyant and to make my job the happiest of experiences, I know that you will share with me in determining that together we will do all we can to support Cathy and Alison in making this new phase as happy and successful for your wonderful children as it promises to be.

With very best wishes,

Chris Clarke

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