

ST ANNE'S RC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL
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My Dear colleagues, Parents and Children

I am writing my final letter to you as your headteacher. "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard" A.A. Milne (*Winnie-the-Pooh*)

Endings are inevitable: leaves fall, you close a book and each one of you, in your turn will at some stage have to say goodbye to someone or something.

However, I believe that in the words of Mahatma Gandhi "There are no goodbyes for us. Wherever you are, you will always be in my heart" and each staff member, each governor and each family is and will be, forever firmly rooted in my heart.

I often say that St Anne's is a family, a special place, a magical place, where magical things happen. How fortunate I feel to have lived a privileged life in your service for almost 15 years, together creating a simple magic of happiness, respect and love.

When I first visited St Anne's I knew I would be the headteacher. I arrived as your headteacher with the love and blessing of my wonderful family: Fawne and Cavan who I simply adore, my amazing parents who give so much of themselves in so many ways to so many people, quietly, humbly and with love and dignity and Paul, my rock, my inspiration, my irreplaceable friend and husband, understanding, patient and supportive. These people made it easy for me to share all that is great in my life with the St Anne's family and hopefully this is what you will remember me for.

St Anne's will remain my North Star and hopefully yours too, a place of certainty and constancy, a place I will always be drawn to.

I have told the children in many assemblies to take safe risks in school, to not be afraid to make mistakes, because to stumble, and to fall can sometimes bring the greatest reward.

We have shared years of fun and challenges and everything in between. In the early days most staff believed I was an alien from a distant planet! We didn't speak the same language. We had to strive, to share, to work hard together, to find our recipe for success, to create a place where everyone felt valuable and valued. In time and, not without difficulties I believe as a team, we managed to achieve this.

It's a bittersweet moment to leave the place and people you love but I can honestly say I am proud and honoured to have been a member of the St Anne's team, a team spiritually inspired and guided by Father Clarke and the late Fr Walsh; respectful, compassionate, critical friends as governors combined with the support and commitment of some of the most talented young teachers and the most dedicated, creative and committed Teaching Assistants I have ever had the privilege of meeting.

Thank you for your belief in me, your support, your challenges and your friendship. It is not possible to achieve in isolation and the successes we've enjoyed together have been the result of our mutual respect, cooperation and collaboration.

It has been an absolute pleasure and a privilege to have worked alongside so many colleagues who understand how to bring the best out in each other and in the children in our care.

In the midst of Government legislation, targets, SATs and League Tables, it is all too easy to lose sight of the most important element of any organisation and I can honestly say that at St Anne's we have remained true to our core purpose – the children!

"The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again" Charles Dickens (*Nicholas Nickleby*) and, with this in mind I will see you at the start of December when I will be in Manchester to celebrate Cavan's graduation.

With so much to be grateful for – outstanding colleagues, wonderful parents and children it seems strange to leave but sometimes in life there are agendas, people and plans that challenge ones integrity and beliefs. When I was faced with this, I made the very difficult decision to move on.

As some of you already know, I have said that I would not work in another UK school so I am going to take up the exciting challenge of opening a language school in Spain, teaching English to Spanish children.

In addition to packing up our home in Audenshaw, a home full of 23 years of memories and love I have packed a 15 year St Anne's mountain of memories, laughter, fun and friendship into my heart to take with me on the trip. For these I am truly grateful to you all!

I have asked that my leaving is marked with a simple, routine day, nothing different or flamboyant. I have lived amongst you in Audenshaw, you all know me so well: my family, my house, my car, you see me walking my dogs and shopping at Crown Point North! "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." Dr. Seuss

I am, without doubt, going to miss you all. You have been part of my journey for such a long time and I ask that you continue to support Mrs Duffy, Miss Nally and the wonderful staff in maintaining and improving St Anne's.

My wish for you is a simple one: that you too are able to follow your dreams with love, joy and respect. This is not goodbye. Per courtesy of email I will never be far away!"

Just remember: Only in the agony of parting do we look into the depths of love." George Eliot

"This is not a goodbye, my darling, this is a thank you." Nicholas Sparks (*Message in a Bottle*)

Please feel free to remain in contact. info@bridgewateracademy-alicante.com

I would love nothing more than to hear from you!

Eileen Gaffney

Headteacher