

After 31 years at this amazing school, it's hard to believe that the time has come to say goodbye. When I first walked through these doors, I was a much younger teacher with plenty of enthusiasm, a few good ideas, and absolutely no idea just how much coffee I would eventually need to survive. In those days, the school had just four classes, and yet somehow, we still managed to put on whole school productions that felt bigger than anything I've seen since.

People often ask why I chose teaching. The honest answer is that I was too short to be a policewoman! But in all seriousness, teaching quickly became the perfect career for me, and the answer has always been simple—the children.

Children have a wonderful way of reminding you what really matters. They make you laugh every single day and ask questions no adult would ever think of. They keep you humble!

I've been incredibly lucky to have taught so many wonderful children over the years. Watching nervous five-year-olds grow in confidence, seeing those lightbulb moments when something finally clicks, and knowing you've played even a tiny part in helping shape their future has been the greatest privilege of my career.

And of course, there have been so many happy memories along the way. I'll never forget refereeing the 5am sack races, in sleeping bags at Hillend and being blindfolded around a trail at Youlbury. And I certainly won't forget watching a certain headteacher putting a teacher's bed in a sheep's field—a moment that, even now, still makes me smile. I'll remember the seedlings club with great fondness too—those little green shoots and the excitement they brought were a joy to see. Then there were the Christmas nativities, which were always a highlight, full of laughter, chaos, costumes, and the occasional last-minute panic. Nor will I forget making 60 Christmas cakes and icing them each year, which was a labour of love, and probably tested my patience, and everyone's else's (knowing my cooking skills) Also the exploding blueberry milkshake disaster!

But if there is one thing that has made this school truly special, it is the teams I have worked with over the years. I have been so fortunate to work alongside some of the most dedicated, talented and caring people you could ever hope to meet. We have supported one another through the highs and lows, shared ideas, solved problems, laughed until we cried, and somehow always found a way to keep going. At one point, I even had the privilege of working with a team so brilliant they were nicknamed the Dream Team—and I think that says everything about the spirit of this school. It has always been the people, the teamwork and the sense of shared purpose that have made this place feel like home.

Teaching has changed enormously over the years. There seems to be more paperwork, more targets, more emails, more meetings, and far more demands from the curriculum than I ever thought possible. Sometimes it has felt like the curriculum was expanding faster than we could keep up with it! But through all the changes, one thing never changed—the children were always the reason we came to work each day.

To the parents—thank you for trusting me with your children. It has always been a responsibility I never took lightly.

And to all the children, past and present, thank you. You've taught me just as much as I've ever taught you. You've kept me young... although perhaps not quite young enough!

People keep asking me what I'm going to do in retirement. The honest answer is—I have no idea. I'm looking forward to waking up without an alarm, spending more time with my family, drinking a hot cup of coffee while it's still hot and going on holidays when everyone else is at school

Although I won't miss report writing, playground duty or glitter that somehow gets everywhere, I will miss the smiles, the laughter, the excitement, and the incredible privilege of being part of so many children's lives.

Teaching has never just been a job for me. It has been a vocation, a community and a huge part of who I am. I leave feeling incredibly grateful for every child, every family and every colleague who has been part of this journey.

So, thank you all for making these last 31 years so special. I leave with wonderful memories, lifelong friendships and a heart full of gratitude.

Here's to the next chapter.

Thank you.