



A Fond Farewell – 27th March 2023

Parents, Carers, Students, Family and Friends of Baines School,

The time has come to say my last goodbye to you all, it hasn't quite sunk in yet that I will be leaving Baines after an amazing five years and two terms. Before I give my final reflections, we also say a fond farewell to Mrs. Vuti, who also leaves at Easter. Mrs. Vuti has been an amazing colleague; she started in the main office and worked as my PA during a maternity cover and then settled in to be the Assistant School Business Manager at school. Many of you will know her as she led the whole tracksuit project and has supported so many families with ParentPay and trip queries. She is also part of the team working behind the scenes helping make the social events (fayres and disco) a great success. So please do support by coming to the Easter Bingo on Thursday evening. We all wish Mrs. Vuti the best for the future.

This is one of the most difficult letters I have had to write because there is so much I could say but imagine how long it would be to be reminding you of all the wonderful experiences over the last 5 years. It would be like reading all those Headteacher Updates again....

It has been an incredible privilege to serve as your headteacher, and I am truly grateful for the support and dedication of everyone in this community, I couldn't have done this without the fantastic team of students, staff and families working together.

Of course, our students are at the heart of everything we do. It has been a pleasure watching them grow and develop over the years, and I am in awe of their energy, creativity, kindness and their passion for learning. I have no doubt that they will go on to achieve great things, and I am proud to have played a small part in their journey.

I want to thank you, the parents and carers. When I arrived at Baines in 2017, a lot had to change and there were some tough times when implementing change. You put your trust in me and supported me in those decisions and change. Some of those key things that affected you at home were: closure of the sixth form, the new mobile phone policy, tightening of uniform and equipment expectations, tightening of learning expectations, introduction of online systems such as ParentPay (gone was the morning anxiety of trying to find money for school dinners!) and the online communication and learning tools such as Class Charts, Sparx Maths, online library and the list goes on, but these have all contributed to our improving school culture and learning.

A personal thank you to you from me for how we have worked together. We are all human and we all make mistakes or can learn and do things better. Over the years, I have built positive relationships with families when we have had those discussions and I believe we are a team all trying our best to help the young people achieve their very best in all that they do.

It hasn't been straight forward, lots of challenges and at times I have had to dig deep to overcome them; closing the sixth form, the astro-turf taking ten weeks to lay instead of two, the fire in 2018, Covid and now the flood in 2023. While these have not been easy, they have developed my problem solving and resilience and I have tried my best to maintain the full education throughout all of these things. I hope the students have seen that I have never given up, but work together to manage the situation, hopefully developing their understanding of resilience and Nil Sine Labore.

I want to acknowledge the challenges we have faced as a community, particularly the recent and ongoing water-damage to our main building. It was devastating to see the damage that was caused, but I was heartened by the way that everyone pulled together to overcome this adversity. The resilience, determination, and community spirit shown by our staff, students, and parents/carers was truly inspiring, and it reinforced for me the incredible strength and character of our Baines community.

Some of the things I will remember and will cherish are:

Induction Days; meeting the new year 7 for the first time every year, it is such a special day starting to get to know the next cohort of students for the first time as a group and then the very first day in September, when I always deliver my start of the year assemblies. The students may tell you that I try to choose a piece of music with pertinent lyrics as my theme to start the year. Some examples, Shine (Take That), Search for the Hero (M People), Come Alive (Greatest Showman) Hall of Fame (Script) and my favourite song to say goodbye to the year 11s at the end of their time at Baines has to be Never Forget (Take That).

The investment in the school since I have started has made a massive difference with well over a million pounds spend on the school with roofing, windows, LED lighting, new Astro Turf, toilets, Activ Panels in all theory based classrooms, new computers and laptops, the new medical suite (which has not yet opened due to flooding), brightened corridor displays, outside gym and when the flooding repairs have been completed, a new and improved reception area will be opened at the same time.

The learning pedagogy in lessons has been totally overhauled (and will continue to do so), using the latest research into effective teaching and learning techniques. Our students fully understand the use of retrieval techniques to help their memory, the silent study to concentrate and build their independent learning stamina, impact of literacy, reading and key vocabulary on their learning, use of no hands up technique to support deeper thinking and the list goes on.

The things we all remember are the special events and the extra-curricular activities. So many sporting examples with winning football and netball teams, lots of children representing school, taking part in traditional partner dancing and fun day. I loved taking part in the Blackpool Race for Life along the prom, but the school-based Race for Life is something I will cherish. It was brilliant to see almost whole year groups out on the field running, jogging, walking, a mixture of all at the same time so everyone could have success.

The music concerts are always such a favourite of mine, because I love to see the talent we have in school, from all year groups. It isn't just the sheer talent, but the journey our students go on, some very confident performers but some who go through that personal struggle to perform in front of others and I am proud of them all. Bugsy remains a high point for me, the first musical at Baines in twenty years, and what a fantastic show it was. All made even more special because it fully embraced my inclusive ethos. I never want a child to go home and say, "I wasn't good enough to be in the big school show". All students who wanted to be in it, could be and then some students were given the main parts. It was just fantastic!

I can feel myself going on a bit now and I cannot do justice to all the wonderful moments at our school, the trips, Duke of Edinburgh Award, when students come and show me the work they are proud of, the Eco Team, new subjects in school, amazing art work, award winners and finalists of the Gazette Education

Awards, science awards and competitions, Rufus our well-being dog, when students achieve something new for them, BecomingX, Founders Service, FPA events, seeing the happy students and families on results day and I never imagined myself being DJ Chappers at a school disco!

The photograph at the top of the page shows the award I am leaving to the school, the Alison Chapman Award for Contribution to Enrichment. I hope this will be awarded at the Celebration of Achievement Evening in July to a student who has gone above and beyond and made significant contributions through involvement beyond their lessons, be that sporting, in the arts, student council, mentoring or supporting school events.

Most of all, my favourite moments have been seeing the students in school every day, happy in their learning, friendships, maturing to be positive members of the community and hearing about their plans after Baines and about the students who have left and what they have gone on to achieve.

In closing, I want to thank you all once again for your support, your hard work, and your dedication to our school. It has been an honour to serve as your headteacher, and I will always treasure the memories and experiences we have shared together. I wish you all the very best for the future, and I look forward to watching Baines School continue to thrive in the years to come.

Alison Chapman

Headteacher (2017 - 2023)