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Tuesday, 07 July 2020

Dear Jacky,

### **An open letter of thanks**

As we work toward the end of the 2019-20 academic year, we also move through the final days of your time as Headteacher of Kelford School. It feels so long ago when you applied for - and secured - your new role within the central Trust team and nobody could have foreseen the way this year has unfolded. For almost everyone across the planet, 2020 has been unlike anything they've seen or experienced before.

Whilst we know many have lost so much over the past few months and many more continue to live with a high degree of uncertainty for what the future holds, it is still important we take the time to recognise that your departure from Kelford will not be marked with the proceedings it otherwise would have – and should have - been. Your 19 years of service to the school is testament to your loyalty and commitment to the Kelford community and I am sorry that community can't in turn express this in a more typical fashion.

From teacher to leader, you been with Kelford through the best and the worst of times. If one reads the Ofsted report from the inspection in April 2005 – when the school was placed in special measures – it is clear that this must have been an incredibly difficult time for everyone connected with Kelford. It's during times of crisis that behaviours can often become most toxic, and I know from our conversations that this was a hugely challenging period for you as a teaching professional. Fast forward 14 years to March 2019 and you couldn't get an Ofsted report that contrasts so starkly.

It may seem odd to open this letter with reference to one of the darker chapters in Kelford's history, but this highlights how committed you have remained to the school through such challenges and how intrinsic you've been in shaping the Kelford of today. Many people would have found it far easier to leave when things were so tough, and indeed many schools in special measures see a disproportionately high turnover in staff as a consequence of "improvement".

Yet you stayed.

It's also fair to say that - in staying – you made a huge contribution to the reinvention of Kelford School as a truly wonderful place for children to learn and for adults to work.

This doesn't come as a surprise or a shock to those of us who know you best, Jacky. You are one of the most morally driven and ethical people I know. You are relentless in your pursuit of child-centred practice, and you champion the rights of others to have voice and agency in such a calm and understated manner. It would be easy, therefore, to underestimate your courage and conviction at times, though it doesn't take long for others to truly recognise your fortitude and determination.

Too often, 'inspirational leadership' is reserved as a badge of honour for those who court public attention and seek to place themselves above others. At its worst, it's credited to those who are loud; opinionated; emotional. To those who grow a cult of personality, with the individual becoming bigger than the ideal they represent.

You are the antithesis of this, and yet you are one of the most inspiring leaders I've had the privilege to work with.

You have a deep care and affection for the children and staff you are responsible for. Where others might use 'I' or 'My', you use 'we' and 'our'. You give people licence to succeed and they don't live in fear of failure. You listen – not just superficially, but to the meaning and intent that sits behind the words you hear. You lift up others to have voice, even when this means – more often than not – that the spotlight shines on someone else other than you. You invest in relationships, built on trust and fairness. You seek harmony without sacrificing progress. You have not only helped shape Kelford's values over the past 19 years, you have actively walked them every day of your time at the school.

The simplicity of the Hippocratic oath has always resonated with me. All the power and esteem that medical professionals hold over their fellow man; literally, the authority to determine life and death. Yet their guiding, founding principle is "first: do no harm". In many ways, this simple statement best describes your time as Headteacher at Kelford. At every point, in the good times and the bad, it's always been about doing no harm. About being a force for good. So simple, yet so very profound.

I know that your long association with Kelford School will endure well beyond the 31 August 2020. As a founding Headteacher of Nexus MAT, you will continue to serve the school – and all of our academies – as the Trust that Kelford co-founded continues to flourish. Still, your departure as Headteacher is a huge moment in your career and your

***Learning together; to be the best we can be.***

life, and in some ways your continued role in the Trust could undermine the significance of this change.

Because of your leadership of Kelford, you leave the school in a strong and stable position to continue to push the boundaries for our learners. Your legacy at Kelford is such a fundamental part of the fabric of the school that it is almost impossible to separate out what is, from what otherwise would have been. Almost.

Thank you for everything you've done over 19 hugely successful years at Kelford School, Jacky. Your personal and professional commitment means Kelford has a strong and justified reputation for being a caring, inclusive and child-centred school and the furtherance of this reputation is squarely rooted in the impact of your leadership and service. I'll therefore end this letter with a quote from Pericles, the ancient Greek politician and orator, as his words pay tribute in a way my own cannot:

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others".

That's a rich tapestry indeed.

Thank you, Jacqueline.

Yours sincerely,



Warren Carratt  
Chief Executive Officer  
Nexus MAT



Pamela Smith  
Chair of Local Governing Body  
Kelford School