

Tongue Lane, Leeds LS6 4QE

Telephone: (0113) 887 3240
Facsimile: (0113) 294 0320
E-mail: info@cardinalheenan.com
Website: www.cardinalheenan.com
Headteacher: Miss E A Cox MA MBA



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Dear Parent

Farewell: A Letter from the Headteacher

It is hard to believe that this is my last letter to you as Headteacher of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School. The last 16 years seem to have flown by. Throughout that time it has been my privilege to have been Headteacher of this great school. I will leave with very many fond memories of my time here. I will miss so much about the place, but it is true to say that, more than anything else, I will miss our wonderful pupils who are funny, kind, loyal and just. They have (mostly) kept me sane with their amazing good humour and considerable talent. They are a real credit to you as parents who have been so supportive of the school as we have moved progress forward and responded to the immense number of changes in education that have presented over the years.

Indeed, our pupils are one of the significant strengths of our school. Their very good behaviour in and out of lessons is frequently remarked upon by visitors and staff new to the school. At the beginning of each September, Year 7 pupils are inducted and assume the mantle of high expectations consistently demonstrated by pupils across all year groups that are underpinned by a strong behaviour code. This standard has been handed down from one year group of pupils to the next throughout my time here.

Our pupils are very loyal to this learning community and it is true to say that they are genuinely sad to leave when they reach the end of Year 11. Equally, members of staff are sad to see them go. The relationships between staff and pupils are appropriately strong and form the basis for many of the school's strengths that are remarked upon so often. School sporting activities, debating, creativity and business opportunities such as the recent Dragons' Den activities are undertaken by staff who want to go the extra mile and provide an alternative experience of learning for our pupils. These activities, visits and events are very often the making of our pupils, providing them with a self-confidence not sourced elsewhere. I am very proud of our pupils' efforts and recognise that they are making the very best of the opportunities we provide for them.

Standards here remain high: the teaching is very good across the broad range of subjects taken in a "high standards" curriculum that was praised by Ofsted. Pupil behaviour compares favourably with any school in the Leeds and North Yorkshire area. Pupil outcomes are strong. I am therefore particularly looking forward to results day on Thursday 24 August when I can celebrate with Year 11 pupils who will be receiving their GCSE grades. We are forecasting and expecting a very good set of outcomes. The students deserve to do well.

I know, however, that a good school is more than a set of results. All pupils at Cardinal Heenan are welcome and appreciated for the unique set of skills they bring and share during their time with us. Each member of staff is committed to an additional responsibility that requires them to go beyond the standard job description set out by many schools: we work to develop in our pupils a sense of social responsibility based on Gospel values, so that our learners become people with spirituality who will make a positive difference in society and of whom we can be proud.

A school is only as good as the calibre of the staff it employs. I am genuinely able to state that the school spends a significant amount of time recruiting the "right" staff who will commit to Cardinal Heenan standards and buy in to the ethos that separates this school from so many others. Our staff go the extra mile. It is a minimum expectation; so it is



true to say that Cardinal Heenan remains a strong brand with a very good reputation in the local area and across Leeds: it is the staff, pupils and parent partnership that have made it so.

Parental support is very strong and the partnership between us works very well. I would like to thank you all for all your support, friendship and, more than anything, putting your trust in my leadership over the past years. I have come to know many of you as individuals and as families who have entrusted their children to us over my time here. I believe you do a great job. Thank you.

As you are aware the governing body has now appointed a Headteacher for the next academic year, Mr Peter Whelan. He has visited the school on a number of occasions and is highly complimentary about our learning community. Having met with him and spent time discussing strategic plans, I have no doubt that Cardinal Heenan will remain the warm, friendly and very 'special' place for pupils to thrive, flourish and excel.

I will, however, be sorry to see a number of staff leave Cardinal Heenan this year. In particular Mr. Corcoran, Assistant Headteacher, has been a lynch pin of the school community in his key role of leading pupil behaviour and personal development since his appointment to senior leadership in 2003. He joined the school in 1991, fresh from University, to undertake a teaching role which he has continued ever since and has consistently secured excellent results at GCSE in the History department. He is highly respected by pupils and parents as a teacher as well as in his key role leading behaviour and is a constant reference point for members of staff, offering them support, encouragement and good advice. His office is situated right at the centre of our School and it is indeed appropriate, since he has been very closely involved in all aspects of Cardinal Heenan life. Uniquely, he never forgets a pupil's name or a face, and has been a strong advocate for all our pupils. He has been an outstanding leader and he will be greatly missed. Mr. Corcoran will be taking a fashionable "silver gap year" with his wife, Mrs. Corcoran, who has served the school as a most effective teacher of Mathematics. Mrs. Welbourne and Mrs. Powell Wiffen will be joining School Leadership as Assistant Headteachers for the next academic year and will lead the school with other senior leaders to the next stage in its development on the road to outstanding.

Mr. Smithells, former Curriculum Leader for Technology, is retiring at the end of the academic year; he has served the school loyally and most recently as a Teaching Assistant. Other long serving, highly valued members of staff, namely Mr. Antoney, Teacher of Mathematics and former member of senior leadership, Mrs. O'Neill, Curriculum Leader of Religious Education, and Mrs. Doyle, former Curriculum Leader for English, are also leaving to take up new challenges and responsibilities.

Mr. Bownass and Miss Donnelly, Directors of Science and Maths respectively, have gained promotion to senior leader posts in other schools, whilst other members of staff Mr. Coldwell, Mr. McLaughlin, Mrs. Rutherford and Mrs. Booth continue their teaching careers in other schools (Mr. Coldwell to an international school in Shanghai, China) or in non-school settings. We are grateful to cover teachers Mr. Smith (Science) and Mrs. Hammond (Music) for their hard work this year. They all take our very best wishes with them.

The recruitment process this past half year has been as busy as ever, but in light of national concerns regarding teacher shortages, highly successful. The calibre of new staff taking up posts here in September is impressive. We have appointed strong subject specialists to all vacant posts and have, through the rigorous selection process, identified that they are able to take the school forward in line with our strategic plans. Details of our new staff will be shared with parents early next term.

Taking all these things into account, you will now know why I am able to write honestly that my time here has been exciting, never dull, and very rewarding, with the support of a superb, committed, extremely talented and highly professional staff as well as an outstanding leadership team. Cardinal Heenan will always have a special place in my heart and will always receive my full support.

Finally, I would like to share my personal farewell with you all; being the Headteacher of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School has been a pleasure and a privilege. Despite the sadness which comes with leaving such an honoured role, I very much look forward to seeing the students' further successes in years to come and I wish the school and its community all the best for the future, but particularly in these educationally, politically and financially turbulent, challenging and uncertain times.

I reach out to each and every one of you and extend my very best wishes to all members of this wonderful community. Good bye and God bless.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E A Cox', with a stylized flourish at the end.

E A Cox
Headteacher