



Joy Lane Primary School, Oyster Bay Nursery
& Oysters SRP (Autism)

A Love of Learning - for Life, for All

21st July 2026

Letter from Mr Ashley-Jones

I'd like to take a few moments of your time to say thank you for the lovely emails, cards, presents and good wishes for my retirement. It really is very much appreciated. As I hang up my whistle and leave the day job for the last time, I find it hard to believe that 32 years have passed since I first walked into a primary school classroom as a newly qualified teacher. Looking back, it has been an extraordinary privilege to spend my entire career working with children, families, colleagues and communities.

There have been memorable moments, challenges, fun and plenty of lifelong learning along the way. I hope that, in some small way, I have made a difference – helping to shape children's lives, raise aspirations, motivate children and colleagues and create opportunities for many in the community.

When people look back on my career, I hope they would say that I have been a good teacher, a supportive leader and a positive role model. At times I've been an entertainer, occasionally the school clown, but most of all I hope I've been consistent, reliable, trustworthy and approachable.

Over those 32 years, I have been fortunate to experience many different roles: 12 years as a teacher and 6 as a team leader, 8 years as a Deputy Headteacher and 10 years as a Head of School. Each role brought its own challenges, rewards and opportunities to learn, but throughout it all, one thing remained constant – the incredible children at the heart of everything we do.

Education has changed enormously during my career. We've seen new curriculums, changing expectations, technological revolutions and more initiatives than I care to remember. Even my name changed from a Mr Jones to Mr Ashley Jones. When I started teaching, I wrote on a roller chalkboard – and before you say anything my handwriting wasn't too shabby either! To be open and transparent, I did occasionally keep children in at break or lunchtime to draw diagrams or write neatly on the board for me because they were neater! One pupil even gave me a New Year's Resolution: "Mr Ashley-Jones, your NYR should be to improve your handwriting!" Some advice, clearly, is worth listening to.

Yet despite all the changes, some things have never changed: the joy of seeing a child master a new skill, the pride of watching pupils grow in confidence and the dedication of staff who go above and beyond every single day. Along the way, I have worked with some truly wonderful colleagues who will remain in my memories forever – the good, the outstanding and the very occasionally blooming awful! That's no one at Joy Lane by the way!

I should also acknowledge the hundreds of ladies in my life over the last three decades. Strong, talented women who have kept schools running, children thriving and, more often than not, me heading in the right direction. I bow down to your ability to multitask and, when necessary, tell me exactly what I should be doing. Thankfully, the current Mrs Ashley-Jones continues that fine tradition!

In all seriousness, I have been privileged to work alongside outstanding colleagues whose commitment, professionalism and belief in children – and occasionally in me – have inspired me throughout my career.



Executive Headteacher: Ms D J Hines
Head of School: Mr M Ashley-Jones



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Schools are built on teamwork, and any success I've enjoyed has only been possible because of the remarkable people I've worked with.

To the parents and families I have worked with over the years, thank you for entrusting me with your most precious gift. Working in partnership with families has always been one of the most rewarding aspects of the job. I've been lucky that I've been afforded the time to be the outside 'face of the school' whether a meeter and greeter in the morning or tour guide for prospective parents. I'll always remember showing a new family around and saying 'Pleased to meet you I'm Mr Ashley Jones' and the response being but we've just come from North London and Mia's Headteacher there was a Mr Ashley Jones (my cousin....what were the chances of that happening)

To the thousands of children whose lives have crossed mine during these 32 years – thank you. You have taught me as much as I ever taught you. Your curiosity, resilience, kindness and wonderful sense of humour have made every day worthwhile. You are the reason I chose this profession and the reason I stayed in it for so long.

What memories there have been! Residential trips, Joy Lane Swimming Pool fundraising events, TV appearances, Opal Play, and Ofsted achievements, 100's of parent tours, sharing assemblies which were the best ever as everyone tried to outdo each other, Class Dojo, dressing up as Father Christmas and standing on the school roof, attempting a Noddy Holder impersonation at Christmas, becoming an Oompa Loompa for the day and being told I was "as tall as a Yeti". Then there was the time I sprinted around the school dressed as a (slightly terrifying) Easter Bunny. Looking back, perhaps retirement has arrived at just the right time!

As I leave primary education, I do so with immense gratitude and pride. Gratitude for the opportunities I have been given, the friendships I have made and the memories I will carry with me forever. Pride in having played a small part in helping young people and adults become not only successful learners, but confident, caring and responsible individuals as well as leaders of the future.

While it is time for me to play golf, join the gym, become more familiar than I already am with the M4, the values and experiences gained throughout these 32 years will remain with me always. Education is not simply a profession; it is a vocation. It has been an honour and a privilege to play a part in the growth and success of Joy Lane Primary School over the years.

Like anyone in education, I've had challenging days. But when I look back, the positive memories far outweigh the difficult moments. The laughter, friendships, achievements and shared experiences are what I will remember most.

I've been called many things over the years. Some have made me incredibly proud, whilst others have made me laugh out loud- fancy my wife and I being likened to the Posh and Becks of local primary education. You have to learn to laugh at yourself in this job!

I've been called:

- The glue that keeps it all together.
- The Captain of the Ship.
- Basil Fawlty.
- Here comes the 'Fun Police.'
- And, on one memorable occasion, "Mr Ashley-Jones Moans."

I'm still not entirely sure which of those belongs on my retirement card!



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Finally, I am genuinely humbled by the kind words, cards, emails, generous gifts and messages that have come my way since announcing my retirement. Your generosity has meant more than you know.

And thank you, of course, for keeping all the "Thank goodness he's leaving!" comments to yourselves... at least until after Wednesday!

Thank you all for being part of this wonderful journey. It has been the privilege of a lifetime.

Wishing all Joy Lane families a super and well-deserved summer break and I hope to see you again at some point in the Autumn.

Best wishes

Mark Ashley Jones



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