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Dear Parent

6th January 2020

It is with a great sense of sadness that I formally write to inform you of my decision to retire on 31st August 2020. Having joined the school as Vice Principal in September 1993, it is hard to believe that nearly twenty-seven years have passed so quickly. It has been an absolute privilege to have served as the Principal of this great school for the past twenty-two years. I can honestly say that during my time at Academy I have never wished that I had been a school leader anywhere else or that I was employed in an alternative profession.

It has been an honour to have worked alongside a Board of Governors, both past and present, who have shared my vision for the school and supported me in its realisation. I am indebted in particular to the late Rev. Alan Delamere, Mr. David Donnan, Mr. Geoffrey Perrin and currently Mr. Peter Shaw for their leadership at the helm. I have been ably supported by three wonderful Vice Principals in Mr. Niall Stevenson, Mrs. Lorna Stitt (nee Bell) and Mr. Richard Fegan. The current fifty-four members of our teaching and non-teaching staff continue to reflect the professional dedication and loving care of their predecessors. I have been truly blessed to have a staff who have had a collective desire to put children first.

My greatest delight however has been the children of Academy. They are the main reason for my lengthy tenure. It has been a joy to be their principal. Over the years I have drawn tremendous satisfaction and pride from their individual and collective abilities and achievements. I have enjoyed getting to know so many colourful and varied personalities. I am encouraged time and time again at seeing their early potential later realized in the people they become. Leaving behind all of the four hundred and sixty-three children who are currently enrolled this year, has made my decision to retire such a difficult one.

I want to sincerely thank you, the parents and guardians, for your daily partnership with the staff and your personal support to me as Principal for over two decades. I would also formally express my gratitude to the local businesses, churches connected with our school, to the principals and staff of neighbouring schools and the wider Saintfield Community for their input into the life of our school.

I believe the timing is right for both the school and me personally to hand over the privilege and responsibility that accompanies this post to my successor, whom I sincerely wish well. Whilst in the following months there will be a period of uncertainty and change, I am totally confident that a calm and smooth transition will ensue and that the values, ethos and standards of this school will continue to be embedded in the daily lives of your children.

I know that I will leave behind a popular, vibrant and successful school and I look forward to the next stage of my life's journey with a sense of pride at a job done to the best of my ability. May I extend a heartfelt thank you to you all and wish you and your families health and happiness for 2020 and in the years that lie ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Mooney
Principal