

May 2021

Dear Year 11 families,

It feels quite surreal to be writing my final words to you as your child's Head of Year, with the class of 2021 on the cusp of completing their final and most significant year at Longdendale.

Having been trawling the school's computer network for various pictures, pieces of work and other odd bits to help me begin to plan my 'speech' to deliver to year 11 in their leavers' assembly, I came across an old colleague's words to his year group (the class of 1999), written in a leavers' yearbook. On explaining he'd been asked to commit some words to sum up the year group and his experience throughout their five-year journey, he wrote, *'Now that I've been asked to finally put to pen paper, it's not such a great idea. How can one summarise the comings and goings, highs and lows of 180 different characters interacting over a period of five years? So much has happened – so many laughs, so many really good times and some rows. Where do I start?'*

I can very much appreciate the sentiment! However, I will try my best...

The experience of being the Head of Year for the class of 2021 has been a life changing and career changing experience for me personally. Having worked in education already for seven years at the point of taking on the year group back in 2016, I thought I was well prepared for the task: what a naïve thought this was!

I have to say, being responsible for upwards of 100 students during the trip to Dearne Valley back in Year 7 was one of the most terrifying experiences ever! But it gave me such an insight into the diverse range of characters and personalities in the year group and from there some vital relationships were built, between the students and between staff and students.

After an eye-opening first year as the group's Head of Year, I've loved every minute. It's been a real privilege and source of pride for me to lead your children and navigate them through the highs and lows that life in a secondary school can bring. Seeing them participate in sports days, extra-curricular activities, community events, drama and music performances and showcases amongst dropping in to many lessons has been truly inspiring. Every time I think I have seen it all, somehow this year group have continued to amaze me with a staggering breadth of skill and talent.

Hopefully, I, and the school community, have taught the year group the best 'lessons' - not just academically but in a personal, emotional, moral and social sense, something I'm extremely passionate about. Whilst it goes without saying that the academic side of school is a huge factor in future success, it's the 'life lessons' that play an equally significant role and it's encouraging to see the vast number of polite, well-mannered, conscientious and caring young people in this year group who are about to embark on their journeys and influence the wider world.

The last fourteen months have seen the year group confronted with a hugely challenging situation, and it's been incredibly impressive to see the way they have valiantly dealt with the various changes, rules and restrictions not just to school life, but life in general. Year 11 is always a tough year, but this year even more so with the ever-changing landscape that has come with the territory of the pandemic. They should be rightly proud of their efforts and resilience throughout the various periods of lockdown, isolations and remote learning. The strength of character they've shown is something I won't forget for the rest of my career.

The support the year group have received in school during this challenging period has stemmed from the excellent tutors who have worked hard to build positive relationships with the students in their groups. The year group and I have been fortunate to have had such a fantastic team over the last five years. I would like to say a huge thank you to all the staff that have been tutors for the year group, and in particular the most recent team: Mrs Emery, Mr Boardman, Miss Hulston, Miss Warnock, Mr Williams and Miss Hill, and also a huge thank you to past members of the team still at Longdendale – Miss Maiolani, Miss English, Mr Millbrook and Mr Baxter-Smallwood. I would also like to thank Mrs Ellis for her tireless and crucial work in her role as part of the pastoral team, as well as Miss Cole for her unwavering support for the cohort in her role as the senior management link. The joint effort of this team in providing guidance and support for your children has played a huge part in the students' success and it's been a pleasure to witness the day to day work and inspirational practice of all these members of staff.

I'd also like to say a huge thank you to you for your support throughout the last five years. It's been a pleasure to get to know many of you closely; I have greatly appreciated your cooperation and input during your child's time at Longdendale, and I'm sure the positive working relationships we've developed will culminate in success when the students arrive to collect their results in August.

My final message is to the Class of 2021: thank you for teaching me as much as you have over the last five years and playing a huge part in my life: you'll never be forgotten. Remember – keep learning, don't be afraid to make mistakes and, lastly, but most importantly, behave yourselves!

Goodbye and the very best of luck in your futures,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Hulley', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

**Mr A Hulley**

Head of Year 11