

Dear Parents/ Carers,

It is with deep regret that I am writing to inform parents and carers that Chris Lickiss, former Headteacher and Executive Headteacher of Unity Academy Blackpool, passed away peacefully on Saturday 23rd March 2024 following a long battle with cancer, aged 60. I am writing to all parents as a number of parents will know Chris and remember his work fondly.

Chris was appointed as the Headteacher of Unity Academy when it first opened as an academy on 1st September 2013 and remained in this post until March 2017. Prior to his appointment at Unity, he was Headteacher at Ashton Community Science College and City of Preston High School, and Deputy Headteacher at Fleetwood High School.

As the Fylde Coast Academy Trust expanded to incorporate other local schools, Chris became Executive Headteacher of Unity Academy followed by a role as Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Secondary). Chris remained Executive Headteacher of Unity Academy and Armfield Academy until February 2022 when he was diagnosed with cancer and commenced a gruelling sequence of treatments.

Chris pioneered the notion of 'In Unity, we Succeed' and set about creating long lasting and significant change, within both Unity Academy and many other schools. Chris was a passionate Blackpool fan and, despite having incredible success as an educational leader, would often list being able to return to Bloomfield Road following a change of ownership as one of his lifetime highlights. Chris was a trustee of Blackpool Football Club Community Trust and was instrumental in the establishment of Armfield Academy Blackpool. Chris was also the 'mastermind' behind generating the funding for our 3G pitch at Unity.

Above everything, Chris was simply a great man; nobody would say a bad word about him. He always put children first and would work tirelessly to improve life chances for young people. His passion and dedication to all children at Unity was inspirational and continued right up until his death, where he would often ask for updates about our work.

For me personally, Chris was not only a fantastic Headteacher to work for, he was an exceptional mentor when I started this role in 2017, a tireless advocate for his town and the children in it but most importantly a great friend and support to me and many others. I first met Chris as a newly qualified teacher at a parents' evening when I taught both his daughters. I feel privileged to have become a friend of his over the years.

His passing, at such a young age and so soon after his retirement, is devastating for all who knew him but especially for his wife, daughters and grandchildren who are in our thoughts and prayers. In time, we will arrange an appropriate and permanent way to remember Chris within the academy and arrange a suitable memorial event to remember his commitment to the academy and the children within it.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. S. Cooke
Headteacher